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Dr Leonhardt
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Mosque of Omar and El Aksa.

Wall of the Temple.

St. and Zion.

Sakhrah, or Dome of the Rock, and El Haram.

Old Tower at Jaffa Gate.

Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Governor's House.

Broad's Gate.

Church of St. Anne.

St. Stephen's Gate.

JERUSALEM, FROM THE GOLDEN GATE, SHOWING THE TEMPLE AREA IN THE FOREGROUND, WITH THE MOSQUES AND MINARETS IN THE HOLY PLACE.



Mount of Olives.

Bethesda, above Bethlehem.

Mount of Corruption.

Getsemane.

East Wall and Golden Gate.

Mount Moriah, Valley of Kidron, and Road to Anathoth.

Fort Wall and Bezetha.

Hills south of Plain of Ephraim.

Upper Valley and Fields of the Kidron.

Tomb of the Kings.

Road to Ramoth.

"BEAUTIFUL FOR SITUATION, THE JOY OF THE WHOLE EARTH, IS MOUNT ZION, ON THE SIDES OF THE NORTH, THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING."

Immanuel :

OR,

The Life of Jesus Christ

Our Lord,

From His Incarnation to His Ascension.

BY

ZACHARY EDDY, D. D.

With an Introduction,

BY

RICHARD S. STORRS, JR., D. D.

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Preface.

THIS book, the fruit of many years of patient and faithful study, is intended for THE PEOPLE, but not for the ignorant and thoughtless. It assumes that the majority of readers in this age are neither thoughtless nor ignorant. It is written in the spirit of the lamented Hugh Miller, who declared that it had been his aim to write *up* to the people, and not *down* to them.

I have not, therefore, deemed it necessary to ignore those great questions touching the person and work of Christ, which now engage the attention, not only of theologians but of philosophers and scholars. The age-long controversy concerning supernaturalism has, in our time, extended far beyond the closets of solitary thinkers, far beyond the cloisters and lecture-rooms of the universities, and enlists, not only the startled curiosity, but the anxious concern of millions. The day seems close at hand, when the final decision of mankind on the gospel of Christ, will be pronounced. I have not hesitated to grapple with this mighty problem, and to offer what seems to me the only rational solution. I have therefore devoted the first part of the book to the discussion of miracles and other topics connected with the credibility of the gospels. I venture to hope that my readers will find this discussion neither unintelligible nor uninteresting.

The predominant design of the book, however, is not to meet the arguments and cavils of rationalistic assailants of Christianity, but rather to set forth in as clear and graphic a style as possible, the great events of our Lord's earthly history, and the scope and substance of His wondrous sayings and discourses. It is an essential part of my plan to avoid all chronological, topographical,

and harmonistic discussions. I content myself with following, on all doubtful questions, the most approved authorities, though the reader will find me sometimes forsaking them all, for what appears to me a "more excellent way."

In the preparation of this work, while many books have been diligently consulted I have been largely indebted to a few, the most important of which are, Robinson's "*Researches*," Stanley's "*Sinai and Palestine*," Smith's "*Dictionary of the Bible*," Neander's "*Life of Jesus Christ*," Lange's "*Life of the Lord Jesus Christ*," Ellicott's "*Historical Lectures on the Life of our Lord Jesus Christ*," Andrews' "*Life of our Lord upon the Earth*," and De Ligny's (Roman Catholic) "*History of the Life of our Lord Jesus Christ*." My obligations to Alford, Stier, Olshausen, Tholuck, Trench, Van Oosterzee, and other commentators on the gospels, are too numerous to be specified.

I must here record my thanks to my friend, Prof. Frederick S. Jewell, Ph. D., for his invaluable assistance in preparing this book for the press. Burdened as I have been with professional cares, it is possible that, but for his efficient coöperation, the publication would have been delayed for many months—perhaps, even for years. He is entitled to my lasting gratitude, and, in proportion to the enhanced value of the book, to that of my readers.

I am deeply indebted to the Rev. Dr. Storrs, whose genius sheds splendor and beauty on whatever it touches, for the Introduction which is prefixed to this book. Whatever judgment may be pronounced on the main edifice, none who enter will fail to be enchanted with the magnificence and grandeur of the portico.

It remains to offer the fruit of my toil, which has been its own exceeding great reward, to my adorable Lord and Master, who has upheld and strengthened me in this humble attempt to spread abroad among men, the fragrance and glory of His precious name. To Him, IMMANUEL, THE WORD MADE FLESH, be glory in the Church forever. Amen.

BROOKLYN, March 12, 1868.

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This reads like a dedication

Introduction.

Great

AMID whatever changes of arts, letters, institutions, empires, one figure continues supreme in history. It is that of the man whom John baptized, whom Pilate crucified ; who built no capital, led no army, wrote no volume ; who seemed to the principal persons of his time to have fitly closed a restless yet an obscure life in an ignoble death ; but who named himself, and who now is named in all the written languages of mankind, the Son of God.

The brilliant names of orators, soldiers, skilful inventors, sagacious statesmen, gradually fade in the vividness of their lustre as other generations follow that to which their genius was first exhibited. But the name of Jesus continues to command, and ever more widely, the love, the reverence, the obedience of mankind. Careers so splendid in comparison of his, and so rich in energetic and governing forces, that to rank his beside them would have looked to the cultivated men of his time like a balancing of Nazareth against the Rome of Augustus, have been lost from sight, and even from recollection, as the race has moved from them, across the expanse of peaceful or of stormy years. But his career remains always in sight ; like the star which shines in its serene heights when the lighthouse-lamp, which near at hand glittered more brightly, has sunk beneath the lifting horizon. More than sixty generations of men,—vexed with thought, burdened with cares, and each accomplishing, wearily or victoriously, its office in the world,—have lived, and wrought, and passed away, since the young child Jesus lay on his Mother's breast at Bethlehem. Yet they are to-day more numerous in the world, and more influential than ever before, who turn with profoundly attentive minds, because with profoundly adoring hearts, to consider what he was. and to ponder the things which he said and which he did.

The fact is susceptible of no explanation, which does not discredit human nature itself, unless we clearly accept this man,—so humble in his circumstances, but in his influence so peerless and universal,—as what this volume assumes him to have been: IMMANUEL, or GOD WITH US. ‘The standing miracle,’ as Coleridge describes it, ‘of a Christendom commensurate, and almost synonymous, with the civilized world,’* not only compensates, as he affirms, for the necessary evanescence of some evidence for the Gospel enjoyed by the primitive Christians. It supplies a demonstration of the Divinity revealed through Humanity in the person of the Lord, than which the wonders of wisdom and power related of him by those who saw them were not more signal or convincing.

If this be admitted, and if what the Church has declared from the beginning concerning its Lord be received as true,—that he was not merely a Jewish mechanic, of a rare and reviving religious genius, but was the only-begotten Son of God, whom illustrious promises had foretold, and whose coming to the world opened heaven to its hope, and made history sublime,—then the biographies which present him to mankind become, in comparison of all other documents, of a paramount interest, and a value transcendent; and then the facts related of him in these biographies, however they surpass what men elsewhere have experienced or observed, show a fitness to him, as well as an intimate harmony with each other, which thoughtful readers must confess. In the utmost height of their mystery and sublimity, they are only, after all, on a level with the nature then attributed to him.

His voluntary entrance into the world, from spheres of being outside of and above it; his self-elected participation in the situation, the experiences, and the nature of man; his residence on the earth, in its humblest poverty, and amid the collisions of its keen strifes, prolonged through the lifetime of a whole generation; the instructions, in which celestial thoughts drop in music from tender lips; the miracles, in which omnipotence is declared with as little of effort as when love suffuses the brightened face; his institution of the Church, as a world-embracing organism, taking into itself those of all races, tongues, and times, and uniting them to each other and to himself by their common experience of his renovating life; his free submission to a suffering and a death which a motion of his will would have made it as impossible for

men to inflict as to push the mountains from their place; his resurrection from the grave, and his final crowning return to heaven in the splendors of the Ascension:—these all are things the most wonderful, of course, which history records; which may well ‘stagger, in some minds,’ as Mr. Gladstone has said, ‘the whole faculty or belief;’ yet they are facts which on the hypothesis of his Divine nature made manifest through the human, are none of them incredible, or even improbable; which, rather, may be accepted, if they might not have been looked for, as the fit manifestation, and the opulent fruit, of the infinite spirit, wisdom, and will, residing in him.

The permanence, the beneficence, the ever wider extension of his moral and spiritual dominion in the earth, reflect thus a freshly interpreting light on the statements of apostles and evangelists about him. With every century it becomes more difficult for the simply philosophical student,—though wholly uninfluenced by that peculiar Christian affection which in the Church is sought to be propagated,—to eliminate from history, and remit to the department of fable or of poetry, the early records of this supreme man: who was born to no rank, and trained in no school, who held himself aloof from none, and did not shrink from the touch of the sinful, who sought no fame, and seemed content to strew his words on the vanishing winds, but who perfectly expressed in his crystalline character whatever all peoples concede most precious, and who to-day governs governments; whose words are the light, his temper the model, and his life the inspiration, of all that is noblest in the modern as in ancient character and thought; and from whose unobtrusive advent the new ages of liberty, of discovery, and of progress, date their birth. It is a true saying of F. W. Faber, that “the Incarnation is as much the world in which we live as is the globe on which we tread.”*

It is simply inevitable, then, that particular incidents, of whatever kind, reported to us from the life of the Lord, by those who knew him, saw him, walked with him, should have for those who accept them as actual, and him as the chiefest Person in history, an undecaying dignity and charm. Whatever he touched is consecrated thereby to their memories and hearts. The places where he dwelt, the cities where he taught, the hills on which he prayed, and the sea on which he sailed, are invested with the sublimest, the most quickening associations, that can be connected with earthly scenes. It

* The Blessed Sacrament, p. 308, Balt. Ed.

is not the capricious impulse of fancy, or the frenzy of superstition,—it is an intelligent and a reasonable sense of the unapproached wonderfulness which belonged to his life, and which fell from that life as a baptism of glory on the very localities amid which it was passed,—which to-day leads pilgrims from all Christian lands to the precipitous ledges that rise behind Nazareth, or the terraced and fruitful ridge of Bethlehem. The

——— holy fields

Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,

derive an attraction enduring as time from the consecrating footprints of him who had walked the golden streets, but who consented, for our advantage, to tread the common ways of earth, and at last to be nailed on the bitter cross. No sentence from his lips, but the heart watches and longs to hear. No action of his life, of which the believer would not reproduce, if possible, the image; setting it again in its original circumstances, and catching the very look and gesture with which it was attended. Not only his miracles attract our attention. We think of him in the actions which in others would have been commonplace,—dining, sleeping, sitting by the way-side, greeting the traveler, or standing on the pebbly beach,—and still our souls are conscious of a secret glow almost as ardent as when we watch him descending the stony pitch of Olivet, or reasoning with the rulers on the pavement of the temple.

The charm which thus emanates from the supremacy of his person, and irradiates the visible scenes which he has hallowed, would have been indeed too powerful, if not in a measure counteracted, to leave Christianity itself unimpaired, as a spiritual religion, designed for the world. And so it has been made impossible, in Providence, for the precise spot of his birth or his baptism, of his transfiguration, his death, his burial, or his ascension, to be beyond dispute identified; and no personal relic whatever remains of him. An idolatrous adoration of things earthly and temporal would have otherwise seemed inevitable in Christendom. If any parchment, like the letter to Agbarus mentioned by Eusebius,* on which his hand had traced some lines in the Syriac language, remained among men, no setting of diamonds would be precious enough wherewith to incase it. If the early legend had been true, and the napkin of Veronica had kept the imprint of his face as he wiped

* Hist. Eccl., B. 1, chap. 13.

with it the bloody sweat on his way to the cross, the city which contained it would have been, by means of it, the centre of concourse for mankind. Only in general, therefore, do we know where he tarried or wrought. Only the significant facts of his life are left on record for our instruction. For these make impression on the soul, not the sense; and, by reason of their wonderfulness, they are as near and as glorious to those who look up to them from the banks of Indian or American rivers as if these had followed the winding Jordan from its sweet fountains to its salt grave, or had climbed to the crest of Tabor or of Hermon.

And yet, as it is with all other facts which the senses report or which thought apprehends, so, most of all, with these which the gospels narrate of the Lord. They have their value in their significance, and not in their mere sublimity or strangeness. As every crystal, from the snow-flake this instant swinging through the air to the diamond on whose history volumes are written, attracts the philosopher to the study of itself because in its special structure and form it incorporates a law, and so becomes to him a lens, through which he may discern great secrets of nature; as each heroical action of men, in the crisis of their fortunes, reveals the undetermined capacity, for tranquility amid pains, for victory over force and a joyous self-sacrifice, which forever is lodged in the consecrated soul, and so becomes to the thoughtful observer more rich in suggestion than any dazzling march of armies, or the most successful achievement of skill in the intricate whirls of diplomatic intrigue;—so, and still more, it is not so much by what they are, as by what they evidently contain and declare, that the facts which confront us in the life of the Lord engage and reward the thoughts of disciples. The secret of their preciousness, the hiding of their power, is in this: that—admitting the Lord to have been what faith, from both prophecy and history, affirms him to have been—through these facts are declared to us, in the sharpness and fulness of a personal revelation, the life, the might, and the character of the Most High; that He whom men had blindly groped after, and whom, as Paul declared of the Athenians, they unknowingly had worshipped, is here set forth in the perfect discovery of His grace and His glory, to draw men in penitent love to Himself.

The most amazing event of time,—the appearing of Him by whom all things consist, in the person of a man, partaking the experience and sharing the nature of those whom His will had first created, and whom it still restored

by a word from the grave to life,—this had a purpose as sublime as itself. All preceding procedures of grace and truth were completed in it; and the waiting yet rebellious world, which had worshipped the winds, had called stars and streams to be its gods, had molten the gold, and had almost chiseled the marble into life, in its search for a divinity, gained in Him the vision of its Maker.*

It is not then a point which needs to be argued that to one who so accepts the Lord the interest which essentially belongs to his life must be supreme, and be as immortal as the soul. The most vital and transcendent truth which the universe holds, which eternity can show, is here presented; not as shown through words or in vision, but as realized in a life, and revealed through its continuous action. Realms of wisdom the very outskirts of which, except for this, we could have hardly hoped to tread, are opened by it; and thus it becomes not only the means for illuminating the mind with that ultimate knowledge which interprets all others, but also for enriching the moral nature with a profound and prophetic experience, in comparison of which all else that we gain beneath ‘the low-hung sky of time’ is of trifling account. Whoever feels—what all who reflect on it with any attention it would seem must feel—that to have a sufficient and certain apprehension of Him from whom all being is, and in whose mind are the archetypes of the Universe, is of paramount consequence to those who in spiritual constitution are like Him, and whose real blessedness and perfect exaltation are only to be found in alliance with Him, must find in these records of the life of the Lord attraction to the intensest study, while always conscious that whatever he has learned, the fulness of their treasures remains unexhausted. Such a motive as that which impels him to this study can animate the scholar in no other inquiry. He may well be assured that the spirits of light partake his interest, and aspire to share the rewards of his study.

For it is no mere knowledge which such an one attains, as he dwells upon

* “The God who dwells in a light inaccessible, into which the human spirit can not penetrate, must descend to humanity, bringing himself into the limits of its own finiteness, in order to be truly known by it. Not until the incarnate manifestation of Deity through Christ could the God afar off draw near to mankind. For the first time, through this image of the Divine in human nature, was the idea of God enabled to enter, in a vital and substantial way, into the consciousness and thought of the race.”—*Neander. Der erste Brief S. Johannis*: p. 123.

the gospels, concerning the usages and the spirit of society, in the country of Palestine, in the eighth century of the history of Rome. It is not simply a new view which he gains of the mystic and solemn order of history, as he places himself at that eminent point toward which preceding centuries had tended, around which the world unconsciously paused in a strange peace, and from which after times have taken their direction ; where thus the real harmonies, in what otherwise were inextricable and bloody tangles of confusion, become apparent. It is not simply a juster impression which such a student may hope to gain, and may in fact gain, of other truths, greater than these, yet all auxiliary to the greatest :—of the guilt of sin, and its tenacious grasp on our nature, as illustrated by the mission of the Saviour ; of the nature of Redemption, and the grandeur of the elements that are combined in it to accomplish the atonement and the renewal which we need ; or, even, of the glories still surpassing our thought, but surely, hereafter to appear, as the heavenly fruit of that atonement and that renewal.

All these will indeed be gained by him who studies with attentiveness, and with spiritual insight, the life which began in the mystery of Incarnation, and which closed, as it seemed, in the darker mysteries of Gethsemane and the Cross. But still the essential and the perfect result to be attained from such a study is that which the Lord himself pointed out as constituting the motive which drew him to the world : “that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly ;” even that unbounded and absolute life whose element is “that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” Because it is true as Paul affirmed, in that majestic and luminous sentence written to the Corinthian converts, that “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” therefore it is true, as he in the preceding paragraph had said, that “we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

All other attainments are insignificant beside this. When it is accomplished in any soul, that has within it a light and life, a plenary peace, a mystery of power, an ecstatic enjoyment, which surpass the results that secular studies can produce as the vital force surpasses food, as thought surpasses the reach of the hand. The solid visible frame of things might go

v to pieces, in flame and thunder, without troubling the spirit at rest in this experience. It has nothing to wish for, except an existence continued through immortal years.

Not only is the life of the Lord, in its entirety, the inestimable means for bringing us to such a knowledge of God, and to such an experience conditioned upon it; but it is wonderful to see how each separate part, the most unobtrusive and familiar particular, in that brief but ample and crowded career, bears on the result; how each fraction of it is freighted with Divinest meaning when we have found the secret of its glory, in the manifestation it makes of God. Not only do the miracles attest His power, and unveil the energy to which the act of creation was but a choice. Not only do the signal utterances of truth show forth His wisdom, and tell us, as sunbeams tell of the sun, of that effulgent and unsearchable mind before which angels bow in awe. The silent years, so many in comparison with the three of the ministry, yet of which our records are so brief, reflect the patience of the Eternal, and His recognition of the fitness of times in His most gracious operations. The tears of Jesus become to us drops from the Infinite sympathy, beneath which our inmost hearts are melted. His interest in the humblest things reproduces before us the mind Supreme, to which nothing is small, and which equally rounds the drop of dew and the photo-sphere of suns. His benediction of the children whom he took in his arms makes us say "Our Father" with warmer heart. His very delay in answering some requests interprets the pauses in God's ways, and gives us new motives to continuance in prayer. His smile lights up the very heavens, as it reveals the Omnipresent compassion, and pours a sunshine on our souls which brightest mornings could not image. While still from his sad rebuking glance flashes a light that illumines all warnings of the world, and is itself yet more admonitory; that makes what is meant by the 'outer darkness' almost palpable to our thoughts, and lifts the Judgment before our minds as real and near.

As the Lydian river was fabled to change the very sands its current touched to grains of gold, so the Divinity of the Lord, in fact, not in fable, makes precious beyond computation or compare the minutest incidents in his career. Whatever he did, any words that he said, while he tarried on earth, become vivid in significance, and rich in the most illustrious suggestions, when studied in the light that falls upon them from his supreme nature; as

the poor frayed threads of his common raiment grew lustrous with celestial splendor when he was manifest in his glory. Not without reason did the woman believe a virtue to reside in the hem of his garment. And no text droops like a frail fringe from the narratives which are the woven robes in which he still appears to men, that has not in it a secret virtue for one who lovingly takes it in hand.

What kind of study is appropriate, then, to this life of the Lord,—is necessary, if we would gain from it its proper and sufficient fruits,—is easily evident from what has been said. A kind of half-poetic pleasure may be derived from a cursory survey of it. Vague aspirations, pointing feebly toward heroism in purpose, and the beauty of goodness, may be sluggishly stirred by a consideration of detached portions of it. But if we would have the very soul ennobled and dilated, in all its intellectual powers, as that immensest thought of the world is intelligently received, that God for us has been revealed in the person of His Son,—most of all, if we would have the heart pervaded and purified by the spiritual life which this portraiture of the Lord is meant to inspire,—then we must study it carefully, largely, with intent contemplation, with all the helps which we can summon; and then, above all, we must study it with affectionate and eager desire to know the secret meanings of it, and to have the total impression which it leaves adequate to its incomparable glory. For it is not a system of doctrines which we examine, when we seek to know this life of the Lord. It is not a series of moral precepts, the most instructive and salutary of time. We look upon a PERSON, in his action and discourse; and a Person is revealed only through the sympathetic vibration which he stirs in our souls. Neither action nor discourse will open to us their inmost import till we are responsively related to him who is manifest in both.

In this respect it is with the transcendent life of the Lord as it is with all the humbler lives of those who have served him in the world. It is of real and great account to us to be familiar, as we may be, with the life of St. Paul. A bracing, inspiring influence comes, over the centuries, from his heroic and indefatigable career. His work for men had nowise ended when his head had fallen beneath the sword, on the Ostian road. He blesses us still, by his spirit as by his words, from Philippi and from Corinth. But we never understand him till we are ourselves, in a measure at least, in sympathy with him. And what were a catalogue of his perils and pains, his vicissitudes

of fortune, his missions and his martyrdom, to one who did not comprehend through such sympathy the motives that urged and the purpose that ennobled him? It is of eminent service to us of know what we may of the life of St. John; that man 'of fiery love and fiery hate,' whose hate was at last all melted or exhaled in a consummate love. But what could be really told us of his life,—though the narrative stretched from the shore of Gennesaret to the rocks around Patmos,—unless we had felt in our own hearts something akin to that spirit in him which made him at first the beloved disciple, and at last the chosen seer of the Apocalypse? And so, and still more, must we gain through prayer an inward and quickening sympathy with the Lord, before the very narratives of the Gospel can make HIM live and move before us, whom Paul and John adoringly served; in whom we meet the ideal of Humanity, but are faced as well, and overshadowed, by the present Divinity; through the tender and kindling eyes of whom we see the Creator's face shining on us, and are conscious that it is not a mere human career—the most eminent of the ages—which we observe, but that still through those eyes, 'as meditation soars upward, it meets the arched firmament, with all its suspended lamps of light.'

Through such a sympathy, wrought within us by the Spirit of God, may we come to what Pasquier Quesnel called 'the sacrament of the Gospels,'* and look to find the Lord whom they present made evident to our souls. We learn then how matchless was the wisdom that formed these, and that still has preserved them, amid the disasters of letters and of empires, and has kept them as fresh and full as at first;—written with a beauty, and an unconscious pathos, which inspiration alone could have secured; their simplicity as inimitable as their sublimity; even the apparent discrepancies between them becoming but the hooks to hold more firmly and closely to them the thoughts of their students; their four-fold unity presenting with a perfection not otherwise attainable the image of Him, fairer than men, to whom alike they all give witness. The study of catechisms, and of systems of doctrine, except as subordinate to this study of the gospels, will only give us

* "And why may I not use this expression, taking the word Sacrament, in general, for the sign and conveyance of some sacred thing? since nothing is more sacred, and more conducive to salvation, than that which God has deposited and concealed under the visible sign of the Evangelical word."

that remote and theoretic conception of the Lord with which many theologians have seemed to be content. Hardly more will he be to us than a doctrinal thesis, or a logical proposition ; a necessary factor in the scheme of salvation, but not, as he should be, a living, loving, active Saviour, full of might, but full of grace, on whom we too should have gazed with awe, on whom we too could have leaned at supper.

But when, with an attentive mind, and a heart eager to catch and keep each glimpse of his glory, one ponders these marvellous narratives which present him, with such careful detail, in such picturesque freedom, through an atmosphere as transpicuous as that of the perfect Syrian day, it is wonderful to see how his life comes forth from the distance of otherwise vanished years, and reappears as if but yesterday it had been actual. The faith then formed in us is far enough from being one in which 'the sensation of positiveness is substituted for the sense of certainty, and the stubborn clutch for quiet insight.' It is a faith to which the intellect and the heart both have contributed, stimulating each other in intimate and mutually helpful reactions ; in which the imagination, using the helps of the Divine history, and quickened by the quickened affections, has bridged the ages, and brought again the Crucified and the Crowned distinctly to sight.

The Lord appears to such a student, through the vital and tender delineation of the gospels, as he promised to appear to those who should seek him after he had departed from the earth. In his meekness and his majesty, in his patience and his power, tempted yet triumphant, insulted yet serene, scoffed at by men but worshiped of angels, with the world at his disposal yet making himself the poorest in it, submitting to the crown of thorns the head on which are many diadems, allowing the nails to be driven through the hands whose touch had before unloosed for others the bars of death,—so comes before the illumined thoughts this Son of the Eternal ; this Prince and King of the kings of the earth. Ever more distinct becomes the vision, as the still renewed feeling awakens the mind to new intentness and clarifies it to a fresh perspicacity. Contemplating him, in his beauty of holiness, subjected to death for our redemption, a fire and force of affection pervade us by which conception is almost transmuted into sight. Penitence, joy, love, shame, hope, praise,—not contending, but mingling in a grateful grief, and all conspiring to a passionate tenderness,—these stir up every power of thought. They make the soul alert, far-visioned ; quick to detect, and

wise to interpret, all that is contained in the lucid and manifold evangelical narrative ; until that soul is as certain of its Lord, and almost as intuitive of his presence, as if the mount of his glory burned yet in the splendors that faded from the eyes of the disciples, as if the sky had not yet closed behind the ascending form at Bethany.

Then is the work of the gospels complete, for him who studies them. Then is the fruit of that Divine guidance by which they were prepared presented in his surpassing experience. For then, in the light that has shined from them on the person of the Lord, all things are transfigured. Life is sacred. Death is sweet. Heroism is easy ; self-sacrifice a delight. Each work for the Master becomes a worship. The eating of bread in his dear name is not a form, nor an outward memorial, but a mystical sacrament, through which his present love is declared. The Church expands to a vast and vital fellowship of believers, knit together in him,—many on earth, and more on high. The whole earth is a temple, since the Lord hath been in it. The grave is perfumed, since he there lay. The Future is resplendent with immortal invitations. Indeed, that Future is not far off. It invests our life, at such an hour, and is prophesied in it. For the experience then already attained needs only to burst its imprisoning shell to be revealed in all the glory of the life everlasting.

No man has derived the highest advantage from the study of the gospels, till he has known this grandest experience. No man has known this until he has studied them, not with a common cursory carelessness, but with prolonged and searching thoughtfulness, and with the heart engaged to the work as well as the intellect. But whosoever has gained and felt this has known that in it he drew nearer than elsewhere to the gates of pearl, and the instant vision of the King in his beauty. And so it is that from all the other portions of the Scriptures,—fascinating as are many of them with narrative or portraiture, resplendent as often they are with miracle, or wondrous with prophecy, full as they all are of the truth of the Most High, and its renovating power,—the hearts of Christians instinctively turn to these which are central in the series. So it is that with each successive revival of God's great spiritual work in the world, the sign of its coming, the pledge of its reality, are found in the fact that through the gospels the person, the work and the character of the Lord become present and paramount in men's thoughts. He is not to them, then, as at other times he may have been, an

undefined spirit of beauty and power, rising against the eastern sky. He is not a simple doctrine of forgiveness. He is not a being whom picture or statue may sufficiently represent, and to whose shrine they who think of and honor him may acceptably bring gifts like those of shells, flowers, and amber, which the royal sculptor brought of old to the ivory statue which his hands had fashioned.* The Lord to those to whom he has appeared, revealing himself through the story of the gospels in completest discovery, that he might prepare them, at critical times, for his sublimest errands in the world, has been manifest in a purity which no ivory could image, and a glory of which the sun itself were a poor shrine. An inspiration raining on them, from such a radiant disclosure of him as that to Stephen hardly surpassed, has made them too go to labor or death on his behalf with faces shining like those of angels. And then the jewels they have offered to him have been the great works of a consecrated life. The flowers they have brought have been the graces, amaranthine and immortal, of souls renewed by a Divine love. They have themselves sung his praises, as neither birds nor instruments could, amid suffering and toil, or on the edge of the grave.

It is one of the most marked, as it also is one of the most encouraging, of the signs of God's grace in our years, that such suitable study of the life of the Lord is now more frequent, and on the whole more successful, than for long preceding periods it has been. This has not come, as it is a fashion with some to say, from the fact that skeptics have made their most fierce and frequent attacks in these recent years on the record of the gospels. That has also been painfully true. But the movement among Christians toward the more profound and affectionate study of the same supreme record

* There are multitudes, no doubt, in the Roman Communion who hold with one of the purest and noblest of its English adherents (Faber) that "to make Jesus better known is to make him better loved, and the love of Jesus is the sanctity of the Church." But one who enters a chapel of that Communion, and looks upon the crucifix, with the offerings before it, can hardly help sometimes being painfully reminded of those lines of Ovid, describing the effort of Pygmalion to awaken into life and love his ivory image :

Munera fert illi conchas, teretesque lapillos,
Et parvas volucres, et flores mille colorum,
Lilliaque, pictasque pilas, et ab arbore lapsas
Heliadum lacrymas. Ornat quoque vestibus artus.

Dat digitis gemmas ; longoque monilia collo.—Met. x : 260-4.

preceded such attacks, and was their occasion instead of their consequence. Peculiar outbreaks of hostile passion from the kingdom of darkness, against the kingdom of light and peace, attended the appearance of the Lord on the earth; as if the forces that wrought to resist him had been held in reserve for that critical hour, to be then precipitated, in fiercest assault of infernal phalanx, on the field of his Divine operations. The very sky of Palestine looks lurid, its sod seems teeming, with malign shapes and glancing figures swift for evil, as we revert to the years when he walked there. And so in our time more energies are combined against the records which testify of him because amid these he appears, to minds made freshly attentive to him, more clearly and grandly than before. The claim which he urges on the fervent faith and the utmost obedience of those to whom he manifests God is more evident as his portrait is more carefully studied. And those who hold his claim fictitious, and his government undesirable, must therefore shatter if they can, or darken and scratch if they can not do more, this wondrous mirror of his perfections.

But the effort will be fruitless, now as before; and the very wrath that would have nailed these life-giving narratives to the cross of a destructive criticism will be made in the end, as it has in a measure already been, to assist their triumph. The Abyssinian Christians have canonized Pilate. The future more enlightened Christendom will recognize the real, though alas! the unintended service, rendered to the gospels, and so to the Christian culture of mankind, by those who if they could would have buried these gospels, without ointments or spices, in a sepulchre to be broken by no resurrection.

The movement among Christians toward a more intent study and a wider appreciation of the life of the Lord, has had its source in an impulse of God's Spirit. But it has been aided by the reflex action of those Christian missions which have been so suddenly and so immensely extended in the last half-century. The preacher of Christ among the heathen has found not his own inspiration alone, but the instrument of his chiefest power in converting men to God, in the story of the Cross. And the story of the Cross implies that of Bethlehem, and of all which intervened between the manger and the throne. Patiently, therefore, with most absorbed and affectionate study, have many of these watchers and workers for the Lord on darkened shores explored the story of the Master, to put him by God's help before themselves

in the wondrous synthesis of his glories, and then to be able to present him to others in a like revelation of his Divine life. And from them has come the bright influence back on those from whom they had gone out, to inspire them to a similar study. Revivals at home have been quickened and widened by this influence, and have conspicuously borne its impress. The preaching of the doctrines, declared in the Epistles, has not been neglected. The application of the rules of righteousness in the Bible to human affairs has been only more searching than before. But the vivid and various preaching of Christ has given peculiar lustre and power to the Protestant pulpit in these late years; and Christians have found themselves edified most, and men who had not known the Lord have been most quickly and deeply stirred, as he who came to be their Saviour, who shall come hereafter to be their Judge, has been, through discourses which were richer and more quickening than the costliest pictures, presented to them.

So it is that the diligent study of the gospels is now wider, perhaps, than it ever has been. So it is that the attacks made upon them are more desperate. So it is that the question ‘whether Christ made the Church, or the Church has made him,’—whether, as Owen stated it in his day, “he, being God, was made man for our sakes, or, being only a man, was made a god for his own sake,”*—has been more profoundly and eagerly discussed than it has been since the Council of Nice. And so it is, through a clearer and more general revelation of the Lord to the mind of mankind, that the infinite Spirit is now working in the earth to bring in the final glory of his reign. It is among the brightest signs of that approaching Millennial day of light and love for which the world still waits and moans, and which the Church surely expects, that He of whom the martyrs witnessed, and in whose holy faith and service millions of men have nobly lived and gladly died, is more plainly declared from press and pulpit, is more evidently seen through the Scriptural record, than for centuries he has been. A new spiritual coming and triumph of the Lord are surely to be evolved from this closer struggle of his holy kingdom with the kingdom of evil. God hasten it, in His grace! to His own honor, and the infinite rest and welfare of the world.

The volume to which these pages are introductory has been prepared in the spirit of the thoughts so imperfectly uttered. It is itself a manifestation

* Works, vol. 1, p. 326; Edin. Ed.

of the tendency so wide, and so beneficent, to which reference has been made. It has been written for the people, by one whose office and joy it is to minister to them the things of Christ. The fruit of much thought, and of many judicious and enlightening studies, written in a spirit most loyal and reverential toward him whom it would represent, and presenting in an emphatic and animated style the results of a scholarly and sympathetic investigation of the primitive documents which portray his life, as well as of what in later days has been written about them,—I can not doubt that it will circulate widely, and will bear a useful and an honorable part in the work to which it is meant to contribute. May God accept and crown it, to this end, with his favor and blessing! May he who was ‘the Desire of Nations,’ and who is the King and Lord of mankind, accept the intention in which it originated, and the diligent fidelity with which it has been prepared, as a tribute of worship to himself! And may that Spirit of grace and truth whom he sends forth, so attend it with His influence that it shall be the means of implanting, or of nourishing and renewing, in many hearts, that most transforming and heavenly passion of which Coleridge has so excellently said: “Christian love is the last and the divinest birth, the harmony, unity, and godlike transfiguration, of all the vital, intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers. Now it manifests itself as the sparkling and ebullient spring of well-doing, in gifts and in labors; and now as a silent fountain of patience and long-suffering, the fulness of which no hatred or persecution can exhaust or diminish.”

God grant such love to all who read these lines which describe it; and “unto Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. AMEN.”

R. S. STORRS, JR.

BROOKLYN, *February 5, 1868.*

PART I.

Introductory.

CHAPTER I.

RATIONALISTIC LIVES OF CHRIST.

CHRIST'S EXISTENCE ON EARTH, THE GREAT FACT OF HISTORY—QUERIES AS TO THE WORLD'S HISTORY WITHOUT IT—ITS HISTORY, FOR FIFTEEN HUNDRED YEARS, THE HISTORY OF CHRISTENDOM—CHRISTIANITY, NOT A DEAD OR DECAYED RELIGION—MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE RATIONALIST—THE ATTEMPT, REPEATEDLY MADE—GIBBON, PAULUS, SEMLER, AND OTHERS—STRAUSS' "LIFE OF JESUS"—ITS PRODIGIOUS SUCCESS—COMPARATIVE FAILURE OF HIS "LIFE OF JESUS POPULARLY TREATED"—STRAUSS AS AN OPPONENT OF CHRISTIANITY—RENAN'S "LIFE OF JESUS"—HIS GENERAL METHOD—IT EVINCES NO PROPER SINCERITY—ITS DEDICATION—ITS EULOGIES OF CHRIST—RENAN'S WORK OF INCIDENTAL SERVICE TO CHRISTIANITY—GRANTS THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS—CONCEDES THE HONESTY OF THE EVANGELISTS—RENAN'S DENIAL OF THEIR HISTORIC VALIDITY—RATIONALISM DEVOURS ITS CHILDREN.

"WHAT shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate could not evade the question; neither can we. Something *must* be done with Jesus who is called Christ.

That Jesus once lived on the earth is confessedly the most important fact in history. Why, indeed, has no philosopher attempted to write the history of the world as it would have gone on, had Jesus never been born? What civilization would have replaced that of Rome, already in the "sere and yellow leaf" when He appeared? What religion would have built itself up on the ruins of the Pantheon? What art, if any, would have flourished after the decay of Greek painting, sculpture and architecture? What literature would have sprung up out of the rich mould of the dead classics?

Perhaps the problem is too deep for philosophy to deal with; but there can be no doubt that Jesus turned the stream of world-history into a new channel. During the last fifteen hundred years, at least, the history of the world has been the history of Christendom; that is to say, of that portion of the world which has been most profoundly moved and moulded by Christianity. The thoughts and feelings of millions are to-day inspired by Christ, whom, not having seen they love; whom they adore and serve as a living Master and Lord. The intellectual activities and social movements of the age are, to a large extent, quickened and determined by the mind of Jesus. Whatever sciolists may say touching the decay or eclipse of faith,—and they are doubtless competent to speak for themselves,—Christianity is not dead; neither is its glory extinguished; but it is still, in human hearts and in human society, not only a vital force of wide and wondrous energy, but “the master-light of all their seeing.”

Else, why is it so bitterly assailed? Do men wage war against noisome carcasses and “old clothes?”* None are more conscious than the enemies of the gospel that it is a living and powerful reality. Of this, their virulent and ever-growing hostility is a sufficient proof. They are witnesses that our holy religion is not age-stricken and feeble, but full of youthful vigor, and is even now buckling on its armor for glorious war, for universal conquest.

Now such a religion must be accounted for by those who deny its supernatural origin. The problem presses itself upon them; it refuses to be put by; it has become a sphinx-riddle; they must solve it or die.

With this problem modern unbelievers have repeatedly and vigorously grappled. Gibbon, in his disingenuous way, attempted it in his celebrated Fifteenth Chapter. His

* See Carlyle, *passim*.

acknowledged failure did not discourage later assailants. Semler, Paulus, and other German rationalists, pretended to demonstrate that Christianity was a natural and inevitable product of the normal, historic development of mankind; and that its existence, its wide diffusion, its prodigious power, its heavenly spirit, and its victorious persistency through so many ages of conflict and persecution, could all be accounted for without reference to any special divine intervention. The earlier rationalists, however, were comparatively feeble and cowardly. It was reserved for our own century to produce the ablest and most determined foes that Christianity has ever encountered. Two celebrated writers of our own time have assailed the gospel with such imposing erudition, such splendor of rhetoric, such amazing audacity, and such relentless hate, that the names of their predecessors in the same unholy crusade are now scarcely remembered. I refer, of course, to DAVID FREDERIC STRAUSS and ERNEST RENAN.

The "*Life of Jesus*" by Strauss, published in 1835, created a prodigious sensation. Addressed only to the learned, it ran through innumerable cheap editions, both in German and English, and was eagerly read, not only by students in the universities, but also by travelers on steam-boats, by artisans and tradesmen in their shops, and even by women and children in the domestic circle. A vast and motley audience hung upon his lips with mingled terror, wonder and delight. To his own amazement, Strauss, like Byron, "awoke one morning and found himself famous." He had given voice to a wide-spread, waiting skepticism, the growth of ages of superstition and formalism. Infidels everywhere claimed a decisive victory, and not a few sincere believers were staggered and disheartened. Strauss' "mythical theory" was so plausible, his criticism was so cold-blooded and malignant, and

his attacks on the Christ of the gospels were so daring and defiant, that the shock which he gave to the religious sentiment of the world was like that of an earthquake.

Thirty years only have elapsed, and the same writer sends forth a "*Life of Jesus Popularly Treated.*" It makes no sensation; it sinks quietly and quickly into oblivion;—a curious and significant phenomenon. The fact is, that, while Strauss utterly demolished the rationalistic systems of his predecessors, demonstrating that they had failed to comprehend the life and personality of Jesus, his own theory of the myth has, in its turn, been overthrown and ground to powder by recent skeptics. Renan, by conceding the substantial genuineness of the four gospels, even that of John, and by broaching the theory of legendary history, has confessed that the position of Strauss is no longer tenable. The latter, however, notwithstanding his failure to reconstruct the life of Christ on natural principles,—even he could not accomplish the impossible,—is incomparably the most learned and skillful opponent that Christianity has ever met. His signal defeat serves to display, to the joy of believers and the confusion of adversaries, the impregnable strength of the gospel.

Renan's "*Life of Jesus*" has produced a sensation less profound, but even more wide-spread than that of Strauss. It is the production of a scholar and a man of genius, but displays less logical acuteness and strength than splendor and versatility of fancy. It is, indeed, the most brilliant and unsatisfying of French novels. Few, even among its admirers, would be bold enough to call it history. The author himself disclaims a severe, historical method. He avowedly adopts the "method of art." He invokes the "exquisite tact of Goethe" as his guide. He speaks with contempt of scrupulous attention to "the certainty of minutiae;" he deems it necessary to divine and conjec-

ture; and he extols, as the principal excellence of historical writing, "the justness of the general idea and the truth of the coloring." He commends "the artistic interpretation and gentle solicitation of texts." He rejects certain sayings of our Lord as recorded by John, because he regards them as "unendurable to a man of taste by the side of the delicious sayings of the synoptics." Renan's book, as he himself intimates, is an "art-creation" rather than a history. Bearing in mind his avowed principles of composition, and especially his dislike of "petty certainty in matters of detail," we may read his work with real though not unmeasured admiration of his artistic skill, while we cannot but deplore his manifest lack of reverence and truthfulness.

It is painful to be under the necessity of pronouncing so severe a judgment, but one cannot help feeling, that the "Life of Jesus" is marked throughout by insincerity. For example, the dedication to the spirit of his sister can not mean what it seems to mean; for the writer does not believe in personal immortality; nor indeed in any intelligence superior to man. The dedication, therefore, is nothing but a piece of rhetorical frost-work colored with French sentiment. So also his eulogies on Christ are, for the most part, unmeaning prettinesses. His wish to impart a romantic interest to his book, has led him to suggest certain conjectures touching the relations between Jesus and the noble women of Galilee, which can not but strike a Christian mind as inexpressibly shocking. All this may be art,—and it is eminently French art,—but it is not history.

Renan abounds in references to authorities which are quite inaccessible to the majority of even learned readers. He quotes largely from books that are locked up in oriental languages. Perhaps he quotes honestly and fairly; but his citations from less recondite authorities so often

prove to be inconclusive and unearldid, that our confidence in his general reliability is sadly shaken. We find so much of the "artistic treatment and gentle solicitation of texts," that we hesitate to trust him in any case where a polemic or even an æsthetic interest is involved. So much for his general character as a biographer.

Incidentally, Renan has rendered a signal service to the cause of truth. He has the candor to acknowledge the apostolic origin of the gospels. He admits that they were written "during the second half of the first century." As to Luke, "doubt is hardly possible;" he "was a companion of St. Paul," "a man of the second apostolic generation," and he wrote his history "soon after the siege of Jerusalem." He assigns a prior date to Matthew and Mark, and concedes that the gospel according to the latter, especially, has come down to us substantially as he wrote it. Though he is scarcely consistent with himself when speaking of the fourth gospel, he seems, on the whole, not to doubt that it is essentially the work of the apostle John, against whom, however, he betrays a singularly bitter prejudice.

This is not all: Renan admits the moral honesty of the authors of the gospels. While he intimates that they did not hold our strict modern and occidental notions of historic veracity, he grants that they were good and well-meaning men, who did not intend to act the part of false witnesses. Whatever may have been their infirmities and errors, they were not guilty of wilful misrepresentation and imposture.

Why, then, the reader is ready to ask, does Renan deny the leading events recorded by the evangelists? Why does he pronounce the gospels unhistorical and legendary? Not because he has brought to light any historical evidence by which their testimony is impugned and their credibility destroyed; but solely on *a priori* grounds.

He lays down a metaphysical dogma as a fundamental canon of historical criticism; he declares that no amount of testimony can prove a miracle; and, as the gospels narrate many events of a miraculous nature, he pronounces them for that reason alone unhistorical. "In the name of constant experience, we banish miracles from history. . . . Till we have new light, we shall maintain this principle of historical criticism, that a supernatural relation can not be accepted as such; that it always implies credulity or imposture; that the duty of the historian is to interpret it, and to seek what portion of truth and what portion of error it may contain."* Whether this is to be accepted as an authoritative canon of historical criticism, will be considered hereafter; it is sufficient to note here, that Renan, like Strauss before him, assumes it without argument. Both, therefore, beg the question at issue.

Rationalism devours her own children. Semler and Paulus were annihilated by Strauss; Strauss, notwithstanding his leviathan-scales, is crushed by Renan; the next champion of infidelity, will put an end to Renan himself. Meanwhile, the glory of the historic Christ is growing more resplendent, and His truth is surely advancing towards universal empire; for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet."†

* "Life of Jesus," page 45.

† I. Corinthians xv. 25.

CHAPTER II.

INVIOABILITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE AS RELATED TO MIRACLES.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE SUPERNATURAL, NECESSARY TO A JUST LIFE OF CHRIST—THE PRESENT WORK, BASED ON THE REALITY OF MIRACLES—REASONS FOR THE SCEPTIC'S DENIAL OF THEIR REALITY—VAGUENESS OF THE RATIONALISTIC USE OF THE TERMS, "NATURE," "LAWS OF NATURE" AND "MIRACLES"—WHAT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY "NATURE," AS THEY APPLY THE TERM—NO DESIGN TO ADVANCE ANY PARTICULAR THEORY OF "NATURE"—WHAT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE "LAWS OF NATURE"—INVIOABILITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE, PROBABLY ABSOLUTE—WHETHER MIRACLES DO INVOLVE A VIOLATION OF THE LAWS OF NATURE—THE LAWS OF NATURE ADMIT OF THE OPERATION OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES—FIRST ILLUSTRATION—NATURE OF THE FORCE DISCOVERED—SECOND ILLUSTRATION—NATURE OF THE FORCE OBSERVED, AND ITS RELATION TO THE INVIOABILITY OF NATURAL LAW—APPLICATION TO SUPERNATURAL AGENCIES—FURTHER ILLUSTRATION, AND INFERENCES—NATURE'S HIGHEST LAW, ITS CAPABILITY OF BEING MODIFIED BY SPIRITUAL AGENCIES.

It has been seen, that the rationalistic writers mentioned in the previous chapter, agree in denying the credibility of miracles. With such a denial the author of this work has no sympathy. On the contrary, he is profoundly convinced, that no man who rejects the supernatural, can construct a "Life of Jesus" which the world will accept as possible, or even as permanently interesting as a work of art. There was more, infinitely more in Jesus of Nazareth, than Strauss or Renan ever saw,—more than they could see, prejudiced, as they were, against the supernatural element in the gospels.

Hence, what is here urged throughout, is based on a denial that miracles are impossible, or that they are in-

capable of proof. It contends that the miracles recorded in the gospels are credible, and that they are sufficiently attested to take rank as proper historic facts. It proceeds on the fundamental assumption that Jesus Christ was a supernatural Being; that He entered into the line of transmitted humanity in a miraculous way; that His teachings were dictated by the Holy Ghost dwelling in Him without measure; that the mighty works ascribed to Him were actually wrought; that, having suffered death on the cross, He actually rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. All these are accepted and set forth in the following chapters, as essential facts in the history of Christ.

In proceeding to show, as the ground of this assumption, that there is no such scientific incompatibility between nature and the supernatural in the life of Christ, as rationalists assert, we ask, first, why do they deny the credibility of miracles? Because, in their opinion, a miracle involves a violation or suspension of the laws of nature, and all experience goes to show, that those laws are absolutely inviolable. Such, in their view, is the connection between natural phenomena, and so firm and unalterable is the order of nature, that a single physical result, produced by a supernatural cause, would derange the whole system. They regard the supremacy, the universality, the inviolability of natural laws, as established by the inductive sciences; and, moulded by those sciences as their entire habits of thought have been, they can not easily accept the idea of supernatural causation or miraculous occurrences in the system of nature.

The first noticeable fact in the reasonings of this class of writers, is the exceeding vagueness and ambiguity of the terms employed, and the absence of any thorough attempt to correct this evil by exact definition. What is meant by the terms, *miracle*, *laws of nature*, *nature* itself? The word "nature" is, perhaps, the most ambiguous in

use. It is applied to all possible objects of thought,—to the elements; to plants and animals; to beings material and spiritual; to men, angels, and even to God himself.

Very clearly, however, the argument against miracles employs the term in a restricted sense. As thus employed, it must include only the material world;—the world of physical causes and effects, or, in other words, of sensible phenomena. If there is a world of spiritual beings or agencies, it is not included; it does not come within the realm of the natural; it is altogether out of and above nature; it is supernatural. The term *nature*, as used by the rationalistic objector to miracles, has then no proper application to spiritual beings,—to personal intelligences; but touches and includes only the world of material or sensible things. Hence it must be borne in mind, that, in this discussion, it will be employed only in this restricted sense.

Now, it is not the intention here to advance any particular theory as to the constitution of nature. “If the new doctrine of the persistency of force,—the correlation of forces, as Mr. Grote calls it,—should be established; if all phenomena of matter should be found to be due to varieties of motion, to be varied manifestations of one essence, our present discussion would not be sensibly affected. We proceed upon the position that matter is an entity manifesting forces, though requiring the direct sustenance and co-working of the power of God.”*

What, now, is meant by the “laws of nature?” As thus applied, the word *law* is obviously figurative. Our primary notion of law comes from the consciousness of duty,—from the feeling of obligation to act according to some authoritative rule. Hence, the term *law* properly signifies a rule of action. When we survey the natural

* Fisher's Essays, page 476.

world,—the world of *sense*, let it be remembered,—we are struck with the appearance everywhere of forces in constant operation. A closer observation convinces us, that those forces do not operate hap-hazard, but with well-determined regularity; that is to say, they appear to act in systematic accordance with certain laws. Phenomena are so linked together in nature, that they present to our view striking uniformities, which, seized upon by the intellect, and reduced to their simplest expressions, are called *laws of nature*. Having discovered many such uniformities, and finding them embraced in a homogeneous scheme, we term the classified aggregate of their statements, *science*. Many other of these uniformities of action, or laws of nature, doubtless remain as yet entirely unknown, or are only dimly shadowed forth in phenomena still waiting to be interpreted, and to be incorporated into science.

Now, with regard to these laws of nature, it can not be denied, that, as hitherto ascertained, they seem to be fixed and invariable. Causes and effects are linked together in a uniform order of succession. The presumption naturally is, that this uniform or invariable succession is only a relation and action, accordant with uniform or invariable laws. It is, hence, so probable that the laws of nature are invariable, that, while those who deny their ever having been suspended or violated by the Creator, may be over-bold, the tendency of true science is to palliate their denial,—perhaps, even to justify it. It is indeed quite possible that, at no distant day, this absolute inviolability of the laws of nature may be so satisfactorily established, as to command the assent of every thoughtful theologian.

The question now arises, whether a miracle really involves a violation of natural laws. It is, of course, admitted, or rather insisted upon, that no miracle can be

properly ascribed to a physical cause ; but it is as strenuously insisted upon, that no law of nature is violated by a true miracle. The Scriptures, it must be remembered, make no mention whatever of “laws of nature ;” much less do they intimate, that any such laws were violated by the “signs and wonders” which they record. They ascribe those signs and wonders to a divine or, at least, a supernatural agency ; but, they are far from giving any sanction to the doctrine that, in working miracles, God has suspended or violated those laws which he ordained at the beginning, for the government of the world.

But is it a law of nature that spiritual forces shall in no case, operate upon or among physical causes, so as to bring to pass material phenomena which otherwise would not have taken place ? On the contrary, it is here affirmed, that there are intelligent, supernatural agents, who can and do produce phenomena in nature without violating or suspending its laws. It is maintained that the natural world is so constituted, so adjusted and configured to the supernatural sphere, as to admit the presence, and come under the operation of spiritual forces, without any derangement of its own order.

As a means of gradually approaching the desired conclusion, let us resort to a familiar illustration of the general principle, that a spiritual force may cause physical phenomena, without disturbing natural laws. The well-known anecdote of Sir Isaac Newton and the apple, while probably apocryphal, is still in point, as such an illustration. Walking in his orchard, and observing an apple fall from a tree, he was led by this fact, into a track of investigation which resulted in the grandest scientific discovery of the age,—the law of gravitation. But what was the process of thought by which he reached the grand result ? We may presume it to have been something like the following. What he *saw* was simply the apple mov-

ing through the space between the bough on which it grew, and the ground beneath. This would naturally suggest the fact that other bodies, under like circumstances, fall in like manner. The question then arose in his mind; why do they thus fall? The answer was, very naturally, because there is a certain power of attraction in the earth, which, when they are unsupported, *draws them to it*. Knowing that such facts are of general, if not universal occurrence, the philosopher was led to the conclusion,—*all bodies draw each other*; in other words, the power of attraction belongs to matter universally. Further observation reveals the fact, that the power of attraction varies according to the size of the bodies, and their distance from each other; and a proper investigation of these differences in attraction, and the circumstances under which they occur, at last leads to the discovery of the fixed law for this variation; namely, *bodies attract each other directly as their masses, and inversely as the square of their distances*;—a proposition, pronounced by high authority, “the most important and the most general truth hitherto discovered by the industry and sagacity of man.” In all this we have, of course, supposed the labor of years, to be crowded into the space of the few moments immediately connected with the observed phenomenon.

Suppose now, that, before the philosopher leaves the spot, a boy approaches, seizes the fallen apple, and tosses it into the air. As it falls, he catches it, and again tosses it upward. The apple is thus made to move back and forth between the ground and the tree. The force which brings it toward the ground is the physical force, just discovered by the philosopher: in other words, the apple is made to fall by the force of gravitation. But is it gravitation which causes it to ascend? Certainly not. By what force, then, is it impelled in its ascent? By the muscular force of the boy’s arm? Doubtless; but what

cause *in nature* put the muscles of his arm in motion? Science is dumb: the philosopher is at a loss. Newton can not answer the question any better than the boy who is tossing the apple. The latter perhaps will say, "I *made* my arm move;" the former, "He *willed* to move his arm, and it moved."

Here, then, was a cause operating in nature, of which physical science can give no account. No philosopher was ever silly enough to reckon the *will* among physical forces. The power, then, that impelled the apple upwards was a human will,—a spiritual power,—a power above nature,—*supernatural*. It was a power distinct from gravitation, and, for the time being, transcending and counteracting it. But did it suspend or violate the law of gravitation? No, the gravitating force operated just as constantly and powerfully on the apple, during its ascent under the impelling force of the will, as it did while it was falling. Thus, it appears clear that, while the laws of nature are fixed and inviolable, they are just as clearly distinguished by a certain elastic flexibility, in obedience to which, they may, for the time being, yield to each other or to the will of man, without losing their own energy, or suffering even a momentary disturbance.

The application of all this is plain. If the laws of nature are not violated by the intervention of the *human will*, in the production of phenomena which would not otherwise have occurred, how can it be shown, that they would be violated by the intervention of a *superhuman will*? The argument allows us to suppose, that as, in the case of the boy tossing the apple, the human spirit operated on matter through the voluntary force, (of the essential nature of which we know nothing,) so there may be other, higher, superhuman spirits equally empowered to act upon matter, through some force unknown

to us, or perhaps through some, to us, unknown phase or development of the same voluntary force.

Reverting to the previous illustration, let us suppose that the boy's hand is withdrawn after the act of tossing the apple, and that some invisible agency seizes and holds the apple suspended in the air, will some rationalist tell us what law of nature is thereby violated? Certainly not the law of attraction. That remains just as truly intact as when the apple was prevented from falling by the agency of the boy. Nor was it the law of causation. There is still a cause adequate to the effect; and there is no proof that the actual, operating force is not as truly spiritual in the one case as the other. Suppose, now, still further, that this same spiritual agency should, instead of the apple, raise the boy himself, and keep him suspended in the air; or should support him and preserve him from sinking, while walking on the water; or should even cause him to ascend to the clouds, and disappear from human view;—suppose any or all of these, and what suspension of physical laws would be necessitated? Might not all of them remain intact and in full play? The only inference proper would be, that some special cause above nature,—a cause perfectly adequate, though mysterious and wonderful, had intervened and produced a series of phenomena, which, new and peculiar as they might appear to us, by no means occasioned any derangement of the natural order, or any infraction of the laws of the material world.

Evidently, then, nature is not an iron system of dead laws, excluding peremptorily from the world of things all spiritual agency, all supernatural causation. It is, rather, a system whose first and highest law is the capability, in all material existences, of being reached and modified by forces of a supernatural sphere. Matter was, in fact, created for, spirit. It was intended to be

moulded and governed by mind. It was ordained to be the instrument and servitor, as well as the limitation and vesture of thought. The monuments of human thought and purpose with which the earth is everywhere studded, all go to show, that the material world with all its forces, some of them profoundly mysterious, was originally adjusted to the world of spiritual intelligences, so that they might be in free and unimpeded communication. How spirit acts on matter, we do not know, perhaps we cannot know. But, that our natural bodies are somehow moved and controlled by mind; that the material elements around us are, in some way, reached and grasped by will, this we do know. Indeed, nothing is clearer than the fact, that the material is open and subject to the authority and impulse of the spiritual. No laws of nature, then, are violated by the intervention of supernatural agencies; and the objection to miracles, that they involve such a violation of the laws of nature, falls to the ground.

CHAPTER III.

THE GENERAL PROBABILITY OF MIRACLES.

EXISTENCE OF KNOWN PHYSICAL FORCES OF A MOST SUBTLE AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE CHARACTER—RELATION OF A BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF THESE TO THE QUESTION OF SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION—NATURE, INTENDED FROM THE BEGINNING TO BE SUBJECT TO SUPERNATURAL POWERS—THE EXISTENCE OF A PERSONAL GOD ASSUMED IN THE ARGUMENT—THE RELATIONS OF GOD TO HIS INTELLIGENT CREATURES AS BEARING ON THE SUBJECT—PRESUMPTION IN FAVOR OF A REVELATION—CONSEQUENT PRESUMPTION IN FAVOR OF MIRACLES—THE GOSPEL HISTORY, ACCEPTED AS CREDIBLE—POSITION OF THAT HISTORY WITH REGARD TO CHRIST'S MIRACLES—THE QUESTION AS TO "PRESUPPOSITIONS" RELATIVE TO CHRIST AND HIS HISTORY—THE IMPRESSIONS LEFT BY CHRIST ON THE MINDS OF HIS COTEMPORARIES—SUBLIME PROLOGUE TO THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

WE have already seen that miracles involve no such violation of the laws of nature, as renders them absurd or impossible. Without going into a detailed and exhaustive examination of the question of their probability, there are certain general considerations of a more popular character, which properly claim attention here.

Notwithstanding the boasts of some scientific men, nature contains oceans of living forces which science has not yet explored. Some of these forces are evidently nearer the mind of man, and are more pliant to his will, than any which have hitherto been reduced to scientific description and interpretation. There are facts connected with animal magnetism, clairvoyance, somnambulism, and the so-called spiritual manifestations, so positively indicative of the existence of such forces, that they are as much beyond denial as they are beyond explanation. These

forces, the far-seeing mind of Lord Bacon divined and obscurely described; and their reality, the most profound philosopher of our age, Sir William Hamilton, felt himself compelled to acknowledge, notwithstanding his inability to explain their nature or mode of operation.

It is quite probable, that, if these obscure forces of nature were as well understood as attraction,—as well, indeed, as they may be hereafter,—they would throw important light on the solution of the problem,—how mind acts upon matter. But however that may be, until men of science have discovered all the laws of nature, it is the height of folly and arrogance for them to deny the production of material phenomena by spiritual beings; in other words, to deny the possible or probable occurrence of miracles.

The reader will perhaps ask, whether we intend to assert that the ordinary influence of mind on matter is miraculous? Certainly not: but it is claimed, that the production of phenomena in nature, by a power above nature, proves that nature is so constituted as to admit supernatural forces into its sphere, without any disturbance of its own order. Nay, more, the thesis may be defended,—that nature *must* admit supernatural forces into its sphere, or itself fall into confusion and come to nothing. It will, in time, come to be seen and acknowledged, that nature was intended from the beginning to be the subject of supernatural powers, and to afford a theater for their operation. The world originated in just such a supernatural intervention,—originated in that grand miracle, creation; and it has to a great extent been, from the beginning, modified or rather glorified by a stupendous succession of miracles,—miracles which, so far from deranging the order of nature, have rather established it. Compared with these examples of supernatural intervention, the miracles narrated in the gospels are not marked by even the shadow of improbability.

The whole question turns on the single consideration,—whether there is or is not any will above nature, except the will of man, able to produce physical phenomena. *Is there a God?* If there is, miracles are possible and probable. This is a question which we do not here discuss. The existence of a personal God is, throughout this work, assumed. The refutation of atheism and pantheism is left to those who have the leisure to pursue it. What is here written is for those who, however they may have been perplexed by doubts as to “His only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,” “believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.” They believe, consequently, in an infinite self-conscious Intelligence who created the worlds, and governs them according to his wise and benevolent purpose.

Now we necessarily attribute to such a Being, *free will*. We believe in His omnipotence; in His absolute goodness. We can not conceive of Him as limited and bound by physical laws; and we can not doubt, if we would, that He is just and good. As a personal God, He stands in the closest relations to all created persons. He is their Father; their Moral Governor; their Judge. The world of mind,—of rational intelligences,—is, in His estimation, far above the world of matter. The latter, indeed, exists only for the former; for “intelligence stands first in the order of existence,” and moral laws are higher than physical laws.

This brings us to the point, that the probability of a miracle depends less on physical than on moral considerations. All pronouncing as to its probability, based wholly upon physical considerations, is altogether *ex-parte* and insufficient. A miracle is, in no case, wrought for the material world, but for the soul of man,—for his spiritual good. But inasmuch as this is the end of God’s moral government, and of all His works, there can be no presumption against a miracle, whenever the highest good of

the human race demands it: the presumption, on the contrary, is altogether in its favor.

Now, that man needs a revelation, may be argued from his religious nature, and from that consciousness of his sin and ruin which has been attested by every religion since the fall, and recognized by every philosophy ancient and modern. That man is a fallen and sinful being, is not a dogma peculiar to Christianity; it is a *fact* witnessed by the universal moral consciousness of the race. The feeling of spiritual need is so intense and so wide-spread among mankind, that it may well be called the dumb prayer of humanity. Now, accepting the existence of these facts;—that there is a personal God; that His highest relations are to His moral subjects; that man has lapsed into a state of the deepest sin and misery; and that everywhere the human soul is conscious of its spiritual need;—accepting all this, we cannot but believe that a Father's pitying eye is looking down on our human struggles and sorrows; we must feel, when we read that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" for it, that it was what might have been expected; it was just like Him to do it, and to reveal the glad tidings of it to His perishing children. Indeed, it is safe to say that no other great fact in history has ever been able to claim so strong an antecedent probability in its behalf.

But it must be borne in mind, that a revelation could not have been made except in a miraculous way. We do not say, it could not have been sufficiently *attested*; that is still an open question. What we do affirm is, that miracles are essential parts of the revelation itself. Every presumption, then, in favor of a revelation from God, is equally and alike a presumption in favor of miracles. Unless then we are to deny a revelation altogether, we must admit the probability of miracles.

Having thus endeavored, (and we trust, not altogether

without success,) to remove the only alleged presumption against the credibility of the gospel history, it is now competent for us to assume its entire truthfulness. Indeed, the four gospels exhibit every mark of sincerity in their writers; they are characterized by an artless simplicity, an earnest candor, and a high moral tone, quite unrivalled among ancient writings. They are the testimony of eye-witnesses, under conditions which forbid even the suspicion of delusion or imposture.

Beyond this, they record the explicit testimony of Jesus Himself, to the reality of the mighty works which are ascribed to Him. Those who deny His miracles, make Him either a senseless madman or a deliberate impostor. But that "*higher criticism*" which charges intentional deception on Jesus of Nazareth, may safely be left to be disposed of by the moral sense of mankind.

The question now arises, in conclusion, whether we are to enter on our work of portraying the life of our Lord, without any "presuppositions" as to His person and character. It is claimed by rationalistic critics that this is the only historic method. The assertion is here ventured, that true history never was written in this way, and never can be. The assertion is certainly and eminently true of biography. A man, for example, who should attempt to compose a life of Abraham Lincoln, with no ideas of the man derived from the impression he made on his cotemporaries, and on the public mind in general, would have no proper conception of the significance of his materials. He would, of necessity, enter upon his course of investigation with an exceedingly vague and unreliable impression as to the results which he was to reach; and his progress in that course would, as a natural consequence, be more or less fluctuating and unsatisfactory. The truth is, he must find the key to the man's life and character, in the impressions which he left on the minds of those

who knew him well. This key must open to him that general conception of the man's life and character, which is his best guide and stimulus in the work of investigation. The process of investigation may reveal new facts and correct erroneous notions; but it will not essentially change the original conception.

Now, we find that Jesus left on the minds of his contemporaries the impression that He was, in a high and peculiar sense, the Son of God. "This view of Christ's person arose from the direct impression which His appearance among men made upon eye-witnesses, and, through them, upon the whole human race. This image of Christ, which has always propagated itself in the consciousness of the Christian Church, originated in, and ever points back to, the revelation of Christ himself, without which, indeed, it could never have arisen. As man's limited intellect could never, without the aid of revelation, have originated the idea of God; so the image of Christ could never have sprung from the consciousness of sinful humanity, but must be regarded as the reflection of the actual life of such a Christ. It is Christ's self-revelation, made through all generations, in the fragments of His history that remain, and in the workings of His spirit, which inspires these fragments, and enables us to recognize in them one complete whole.'*

In this view, there is nothing more sublime than the prologue to the fourth gospel, with which we close this chapter, and which may well stand as the inspired motto of this Life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on Earth :

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and,

* Neander's Life of Christ, page 4.

without Him, was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light; that all men, through him, might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

"That was the true Light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DELAY IN THE COMING OF OUR LORD.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF CHRIST'S BIRTH—HIS COMING LONG DELAYED IN THE WORLD'S HISTORY—QUESTION, WHY THIS WAS NATURALLY RAISED—ORDERED BY DIVINE WISDOM—THE DELAY REQUISITE TO A JUST PREPARATION—HISTORY HAS AN ORGANIC UNITY—CHRIST MUST COME INTO WORLD-HISTORY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS LAWS,—AT AN EARLIER AGE, THE WORLD WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORALLY PREPARED FOR THE ADVENT OF JESUS—SUCH A MORAL PREPARATION, ONLY REACHED THROUGH AGES OF MORAL DISCIPLINE—THE NATIONS GIVEN TO IDOLATRY—IDOLATROUS SYSTEMS MUST DECAY AND LOSE THEIR HOLD ON MANKIND—DELAY NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THE CYCLE OF PROPHECY—NECESSARY TO THE PROPER CIVIL CONDITION OF THE WORLD—THE DELAY A SIMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL NECESSITY.

ACCORDING to the received chronology, our Savior was born in the year 4004, from the creation. Another chronology, widely approved by scholars, assigns a much longer period to the history of the world before Christ.

Whichever we choose to accept, our Lord delayed His coming through long and weary ages. In the promise made to Eve, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, there was no intimation of any long delay; and the early expectation seems to have been, that the promise would be speedily fulfilled. Eve's language in naming Cain, would indicate it as her belief that she had already brought forth the Divine Deliverer. The expectation, however, was a mistaken one: the promised Deliverer had not yet come. Age after age passed away, generation followed generation to the tomb; the world waxed more and more corrupt; millions perished in sin and misery; yet the night still shrouded the nations; no "Day-Star from on high" appeared.

But why this long delay? Why did not Christ appear in the world nearer the opening of its history? The question forces itself upon the thoughtful mind; and, on the whole, it is neither idle nor unlawful. It is quite analogous to the question; Why was Jesus born in Palestine, among the Jews, rather than in Greece, or Rome, or India?—a problem properly regarded as both legitimate and important.

Now we must believe that the time of Christ's advent was determined by the infallible purpose of Him who has the times and seasons in His own power, and that its long delay was ordained in infinite wisdom. Certainly, the wisdom of God may be as strikingly displayed in the selection of Christ's *birth-time*, as of Christ's birth-place. That wisdom has not left us without some indications of the reasons for the time chosen.

The general principle which underlies the answer to the main question is suggested by the language of the great Apostle:—"When *the fulness of the time* was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons."* An earlier advent of the Messiah would have been, so to speak, untimely. At no earlier period, could the conditions requisite to the success of His mission have been prepared.

There is in human history an organic coherence and development. Events, including those called miraculous, do not take place without a certain connection and fixed order of evolution. This order is from the simple to the complex; from the less to the greater; from lower forms of existence to those higher; from cycles of action and incident more restricted in their character and relations, to those more vast and comprehensive. It was so in the

* Galatians iv. 4, 5.

creation, from the origination of dead matter to the appearance of man; it is so with the history of man, from his appearance on the newly-created earth down to the end of time. Human progress in world-history goes on then inevitably under great laws, by which every successive stage is the result of all that have gone before, and can in no wise either anticipate its time or change its place. Science is, therefore, not at fault when it seeks to ascertain the laws of man's development in the succession of human generations; it only errs when it rests in mere physical laws, and fails to recognize, or arrogantly denies, free mind as a moving force in history.

Now Christ was to enter into world-history in accordance with its divinely constituted laws, and to take place in it as a legitimate agency in the new evolution: He was to come into real historic relation to the human family; to penetrate as a regenerating force the great heart of mankind; to mould anew, working from within outwards, the entire race; and at length to consummate His work in the renovation of Nature itself,—in the palingenesis for which prophetic souls have longed since the foundation of the world. All things were to be new-born in Him; from Him, history was to take a new departure; and man fallen was to become, in Him, man regenerate,—the child of God, the heir of glory and immortality. But thus He could not come—into the world's history He could not thus enter, till through successive growths and evolutions that world-history had been brought to the proper shape and ripeness for His manifestation and introduction into it. All this was, however, the work of ages.

We often say of men like Roger Bacon and Galileo, that they were born too soon; that they belonged to a later age; that their genius and their lives were thrown away on cotemporaries incapable of appreciating them. So, too, if Jesus had appeared on the earth in an earlier

But the new age began

age, He would have been born too soon ; there would have been such a lack of preparation on the part of man, that His person and His mission would have been utterly misunderstood and universally rejected : the unspeakable gift of God would have been conferred upon the world in vain.

There must have been in the most ancient times, a dim consciousness of evil,—a vague feeling that all was not right in the relations between man and God. But in the childhood of the race, appetite and passion, imagination and superstitious fear, predominated over reason and reflection, and hence either blunted or perverted the moral sense. Even the cultivated nations of antiquity were strangely blind to moral distinctions. Almost the highest crimes known among the Greeks and Romans, were offences against customs and prejudices purely superstitious and conventional, while they regarded with indifference, not unfrequently with complacency, the most abominable violations of the fundamental maxims of morality. Even in the line of the Hebrew patriarchs, to whom special revelations were at intervals vouchsafed, we see evidences of the most deplorable moral obtuseness. Rebekah, Jacob and his twelve sons, though doubtless far superior to their cotemporaries, committed heinous sins without any apparent compunction.

Now a moral sense so obtuse was by no means fitted to apprehend the teachings of Jesus as to either sin, or salvation from sin. But, as it was the great design of Christ's coming to take away the sin of the world by purchasing remission, and by providing those sanctifying agencies by which alone the hearts of men can be renewed and purified, His mission would have failed of its effect, had He appeared before the moral consciousness of mankind had become cognizant of sin, and of the need of redemption. Yet, this could only be effected through a discipline under law carried on for ages ; for the apostle Paul has taught

us, that "by the law is the knowledge of sin,"* and that therefore the law is "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." Hence, notwithstanding their long-continued supernatural training, we find that even among the enlightened Jews, it was not until late in their history that such acute religious sensibility and profound spiritual concern had been awakened, as found expression in the outcry of Paul; "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"†

Still further, it must be borne in mind that soon after the flood, idolatrous religions sprang up which ultimately extended over the peopled earth, and attained a power as prodigious as their influence was delusive. The faith of the nations in their false gods was for many ages steadfast and undoubted; all their modes of thought and feeling were so moulded and fixed by idolatry, that they were in no condition to accept a religion, which held to the spiritual worship of one living and true God; which taught the entire sinfulness of the creature, the utter worthlessness of all creature works or offerings, and the need of an atoning sacrifice and Savior.

Now, the world could not be in any state of preparation for Christianity, before those pagan religions had run their cycle. Brought to the actual test of long experience, they must be "weighed in the balance and found wanting." Their vanity, absurdity, and pollution must become manifest to the world. Their oracles must be dumb; their priests must lose faith in the gods, and respect for their rites; thoughtful men must find themselves weltering in a sea of doubt and despair;—in short, it must become clear that idolatry could do nothing for a lapsed and dying world. But no such results could be looked for except through ages of sad and fruitless and despairing experience.

* Romans iii. 20.

† Romans vii. 24.

Again, the earlier coming of Christ would have anticipated the full completion of the cycle of prophecy. Aside from the fact that the prophecies constituted an important part of our Lord's credentials, we must not lose sight of the indispensable need of the prophecies as preparatory to a proper reception of Jesus. It was not only necessary that the great hope of a coming Messiah should be kindled and kept burning in the Jewish mind; but it was also requisite that His character and mission should be so clearly delineated and so well understood beforehand, that at least the enlightened and devout should be able to sing at His appearing; "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."* Now the utterances of no single prophet, of no single age, would have served to keep before the Hebrew mind this distinct image of Him who was to come: the mighty argument must be transmitted through many generations, from Adam down to John the Baptist. Not until that point had been reached,—and reached through this precise process,—could the fulness of the time come for the advent of the Savior.

Still further, the free proclamation and rapid spread of the Gospel required a civil order and a civilized culture, which did not exist at any previous period, and which are the fruit of long-continued growth and development. A language must be providentially prepared as a fit vehicle for the communication of the profound truths of the Gospel,—a language adapted alike to the comprehension of the simple and the taste of the learned, and generally current throughout the civilized world. Through such a language only, could the preacher gain access to minds of the highest intelligence and culture, and preach

* Isaiah xxv. 9.

the Gospel to every creature. Many other conditions were also necessary, such as, general peace and security among the nations; well-established and widely extended civil organization and order; general religious toleration; a wide diffusion of Judaism and Jewish influence; and vast and varied facilities for intercourse throughout the civilized world. Conditions like these, assuredly, could not be reached except through ages of national discipline and development; and did not exist until the days of the Cæsars.

Finally, the late coming of Christ was a simple chronological necessity. Christ's appearance and abode on earth was necessarily restricted in respect to place and time. Few of earth's myriads could, in any case, behold Him: by the majority, He must be received by faith. Hence, by divine wisdom, He was placed midmost in the world's history. And in that central position, He towers, like some vast mountain, to heaven; the farther slope stretching backward toward the creation; the hither slope, toward the approaching consummation of all things: the ages before look to Him with prophetic gaze; the ages since, behold Him by historic faith;—by both He is seen in common, as “the brightness of the Father's glory,” and the unspeakable gift of God to the race.

CHAPTER V.

POSTURE OF THE HEATHEN NATIONS, AS PREPARATORY TO CHRIST'S COMING.

CHRIST'S COMING, NOT THE RESULT OF ANY ORDINARY DEVELOPMENT—THE PREPARATION FOR HIS COMING, INDICATIVE OF SOME SUPERNATURAL EVOLUTION—ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS AND RELIGIONS, PRODUCTIVE OF NO TRUE MORAL PROGRESS—ASIATIC DEVELOPMENT A FAILURE—ITS IDEAS, ONLY AN INCIDENTAL INFLUENCE ON JEWISH MIND—THE MESSIANIC IDEAS ORIGINALLY JEWISH AND CARRIED BY THEM TO THE EAST—ESPECIAL RESULTS FROM GRECIAN DEVELOPMENT—THE GREEK, THE LANGUAGE OF THE THEN CIVILIZED WORLD—RESULTS FROM ROMAN DEVELOPMENT—CIVIL ORDER AND ORGANIZATION, FROM ROME—USELESSNESS OF GREEK AND ROMAN RELIGION TO CHRISTIANITY—PLINY'S DESPAIR.

LOOKING back over the ages which had elapsed previous to the commencement of our own era, we see all things pointing to Christ; but we discover no signs of any latent virtue in human nature capable of producing Him. Indeed, while we know that "He was made according to the flesh," of the seed of David, of Abraham, and of Adam, we feel that no human genealogy can "declare His generation."

When we glance at the mighty preparation for the coming of our Lord,—a preparation that involved the distribution, governance, and education of nations, we must remember that that preparation was no mere process of natural development of which He was the "bright, consummate flower." It was, instead, the express supernatural preparation of the world for the reception of Jesus as the unspeakable gift of the Father. All the efforts of scep-

tical writers to show the contrary,—to reduce Christ to the level of an ordinary historic appearance in the normal course of human development, have utterly failed. All history gives the lie to their theory. Jesus was so plainly exceptional in the history of our race, that the deepest thinkers have steadily refused, for eighteen hundred years, to class Him with mankind as a mere man. The “Son of man” he truly was; but He was also the “Son of God.”

This great truth is beautifully set forth by Neander: “The human life of Christ took its appointed place in the course of historical events;—nay, all history was arranged with reference to its importance: yet, it entered into history, not as a part of its offspring, but as a higher element. Whatever has its origin in the natural course of humanity must bear the stamp of humanity,—must share in the sinfulness which stains it, and take part in the strifes which distract it.”*

Turning now our attention to the world into which He was about to come, we find that its history for forty centuries lay among the Asiatics, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. Mighty civilizations were early developed on the plains of Assyria, and in the valley of the Nile. But they were civilizations without God, without even morality; and the religions which gave them a certain infernal life and energy, had their roots in an amazing and loathsome sensuality, which opened no “penetrating vistas of a divine world.”† They came to nothing, without contributing any important element to the religious progress of mankind. No grand moral idea could originate among races debased by despotism and bestial idolatry.

The providential discipline and development of Asia in particular, (and Egypt is historically Asiatic,) lay in ever-

* Neander’s “Life of Christ,” p. 13. † Renan’s “Life of Jesus,” p. 52.

lasting failure and disappointment. Her empires rose and fell like ocean waves, leaving no trace of their existence. Her sages, baffled and repelled by the world without, where perpetual change with no progress seemed to justify the sentiment, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," gave themselves up to melancholy contemplation, to visions of the unearthly, to mystic dreams of a future life, and to the shadowing forth in symbols both colossal and monstrous, of vague and wild pantheistic imaginings.

Evidently, a civilization and culture so barren and abortive, could contribute nothing to the moral and religious advancement of the race. Possibly, some incidental influence may have been exerted upon the Jewish mind. The religious imagination thus formed and fostered, may have supplied the imagery which pervades the recorded visions of Daniel, Ezekiel, and the later prophets. It may even have created those modes of thought which rendered some of the discourses of our Lord, and the Apocalypse of John, intelligible and attractive to the oriental mind; but it contributed no ideas or dogmas to Christianity: the whole was ethically and theologically useless.

There are those who, denying the possibility of supernatural intervention, and, for that reason alone, ascribing the prophecies of Daniel to some unknown writer in the time of the Maccabees, assert that the Jews, and Jesus with them, borrowed their ideas of the future life and the Messiah's kingdom, from the degraded Asiatic nations. Such an assertion is only an intrepid begging of the question. In the acknowledged absence of historical proof, it seems far more probable that the Asiatics profited by the teachings of the Jews than that the Jews borrowed the leading articles of their religion from the Asiatics. The truth is, the Messianic ideas were original with the Jewish race; and those ideas they carried with them into their

eastern captivity; for they had, at that time, the Psalms of David, and the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Glancing now at the younger but greater nations of the West, we clearly trace in their history a progressive preparation for the kingdom of God. It was the mission of Greece to develop and train *the natural man*; to cultivate the reason and the taste; to create science and art; to give to the world metaphysics, logic, rhetoric, and a language, so copious and flexible, and yet so clear and precise, that it was fitted to be the vehicle for the transmission to all lands and all ages, of the divine thoughts of Him who spake as never man spake.

As a divinely prepared mould, into which the gospel was to be cast when it should come fresh and glowing from the heart of God, it was providentially ordered that the Greek should be the language of the civilized world, at the time of the Savior's advent. The palmy days of Grecian civilization had already passed away. For generations, no great philosopher, no mighty orator, no divine poet had spoken or sung in the peerless language of Plato, Demosthenes, and Homer. But Greek grammarians, rhetoricians, orators and artists were scattered throughout the world, and their language was the dialect, not only of the learned, but also of the commercial classes, and that even in Palestine. It is even maintained by good scholars that Jesus himself spoke Greek. However this may be, this wide diffusion of Greek culture and the Grecian tongue was eminently favorable to the rapid spread of the gospel. And it is especially to be noted as tending to further that great result, that the Greeks themselves were growing weary of their own endless disputes and speculations. The Grecian intellect was at length satiated with mere æsthetic fancies and metaphysical subtleties, and was beginning to hunger for TRUTH.

The Romans, endowed with a genius as yet unrivalled

for civil organization, legislation, and government, were also embraced in the grand providential scheme of preparation for Christ's kingdom. The very existence of an empire stretching from the Euphrates to the German Ocean, and from the Danube and the Rhine to the cataracts of the Nile, the African deserts, and Mount Atlas;—an empire tolerating all religions compatible with civil order; bound together by one prevailing principle of conquest and organization, and everywhere traversed by great military roads, safe and practicable for the soldiers of the cross as well as for the iron-clad legionaries—such an empire was itself an element so favorable to the rapid diffusion of the gospel, that we can not but ascribe its existence to the wise counsel and special providence of God.

Thus it will be seen, that, while Christianity received its grand spiritual ideas,—all that pertained to its religious spirit and power,—from the Jewish intellect; and while to Greek culture was intrusted the task of preparing a fitting mould for the truth proclaimed by Christ; a work of no less importance was committed to the Roman mind. That she might fulfill her great mission in the world, Christianity had need, not only of just ideas and fitting language, but also of organic unity and strength. Hence, under the providence of God, it devolved upon Roman genius to settle the external order and secure the corporate existence of the church.

But neither among the Greeks nor the Romans, any more than among the Asiatics, were there any germs of spiritual truth, which were deemed worthy of being transplanted into the gospel of Christ. At the time of our Lord's advent, their religious and moral condition was deplorable in the extreme. The fearful picture drawn a few years later, by the Apostle Paul, was a portrait from actual life. Added to a sensuality more vile and abominable than it is lawful to describe, society was frozen into

despair by atheistic fatalism. Among educated Romans of that period, the prevailing tone of feeling touching everything spiritual and divine, was one of gloomy scepticism. Their culture had far outgrown the popular religion. No man of sense pretended to believe in the gross mythology which still served to amuse and enslave the vulgar. The best minds of the time had broken loose from the old moorings of superstition, and were afloat on a fathomless sea of doubt.

Of the truth of this, the more thoughtful productions of Roman writers afford abundant proof. One citation will suffice for our present purpose. No more melancholy words were ever written, than these of the elder Pliny: "All religion is the offspring of necessity, weakness, and fear. What God is,—if, indeed, He be anything distinct from the world,—it is beyond the compass of man's understanding to know. But it is a foolish delusion which has sprung from human weakness, and human pride, to imagine that such an infinite spirit would concern himself with the petty affairs of men. It is difficult to say, whether it might not be better to be wholly without religion, than to have one of this kind, which is a reproach to its object. The vanity of man, and his insatiable longing after existence, have led him to dream of a life after death. A being full of contradictions, he is the most wretched of creatures; since the other creatures have no wants transcending the bounds of their nature. Man is full of desires and wants that reach to infinity, and can never be satisfied. His nature is a lie, uniting the greatest poverty with the greatest pride. Among these so great evils, the best thing which God has bestowed upon man, is the power to take his own life."* The closing portions of this passage reveal the secret of that terrible passion

* Neander, Church History, Intro.

for suicide, which was a marked feature of Roman life during that period. The best men of the time had come to feel that there was so little left in the world of virtue and nobleness, so little ground for either faith or hope, that it was scarcely worth while to live. The world was, in fact, sick unto death, and even its prayer for relief was only the inarticulate groaning, or the frenzied shriek of despair. .

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING.

EARLY DEGENERACY OF MANKIND, AND DIVINE EFFORTS TO PURIFY THE RACE—INSTITUTION OF THE MESSIANIC RACE AND LINEAGE—SPECIAL PREPARATION FOR THE MESSIAH AMONG THE JEWS—GENERAL CHARACTER AND ADAPTATION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HEBREW RACE—A MONOTHEISTIC FAITH TO BE ESPECIALLY TAUGHT—ESPECIAL MEANS EMPLOYED TO ROOT IT IN THE JEWISH MIND—CONSISTENCY OF PROPHETIC REVELATION: NEANDER—THE WORLD'S GENERAL EXPECTATION OF SOME COMING BENEFACITOR—SPECIAL ANTICIPATION AMONG THE HEBREWS—GENERAL PEACE AMONG THE NATIONS—EXPECTANT POSTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD.

INSPIRED history discloses the fact that, subsequent to the fall, human nature rapidly deteriorated until it was found necessary to destroy the world, and commence the race anew in the family of Noah. This expedient was, however, attended by only temporary and partial success; for another swift and sad degeneration, hardly less deplorable than the first, speedily followed. Again God made provision for the preservation and transmission of a higher type of humanity, not now by the destruction of every family but one, but by the selection of one particular family or line from all the rest,—that of the princely, the faithful, the righteous Abraham.

This man, so rich in all human and all saintly attributes, without doubt the noblest of all the ancient world, was singled out from all men, and constituted by solemn covenant, the father of a new race,—a race, purer, stronger, and more susceptible to special inspiration than any other,—a race to be walled in from the degraded heathen

world by peculiar laws, institutions, and rites, lest the chosen seed should be corrupted by base admixtures or become wholly lost among alien and heathen nations. The express import of the "covenant" made with Abraham was, that through him should be provided that "Seed" in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He was set apart as the progenitor of the Messiah, by a great and solemn rite, by which *paternity* itself was consecrated in all his descendants. Many ages, however, must elapse before the appearance of a proper *maternity* through which the Son of God could make His entrance into the line of transmitted humanity. His human lineage stretched through four thousand years: during all that period His "body"—His manhood—was in process of preparation.* So long did it take to prepare that "dry ground" out of which Jesus was to grow as a "tender plant."†

From this original selection of the Hebrew race, it will be seen that, while civilization,—governments, laws, sciences and arts,—might come from the Gentile nations; religion,—revelation, spiritual worship, an atonement, and complete redemption,—must come of the chosen people;—"salvation is of the Jews."‡ Hence, the special preparation for the Lord's coming, which the world was to witness, lay among this chosen people. It was precisely with this end in view, that they were kept for centuries so secluded from the Gentile world, and so immediately under the divine control and discipline. The direct intent in all this training, was the development in the nation of the proper religious character to secure the great ends of the divine plan. This character was the manifest result of a long-continued process of supernatural education; for the assumption which some have been disposed to accept,—that the Hebrew race was originally religious above all others,—

* Heb., x. 5.

† Isa., liii. 2.

‡ John iv. 22.

is altogether unreasonable: there is no warrant for it whatever in history.

This education of the Hebrew race for its high and peculiar mission is the constant theme of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is there seen to have been shaped throughout by providential wisdom to the exact condition of the race. The life of nations is analogous to that of individuals: both have their successive stages of growth and degrees of maturity. The Hebrews, though a strong and heroic race, were yet in their infancy; and that infancy, while not without a certain docility and trustfulness which gave promise of future improvement, was still wild, sensual, wilful, passionate. Hence, the discipline appointed for them was adapted to just such a childhood. It was a discipline of stern, inexorable *law*, supernaturally declared, and enforced by temporal punishments inflicted by the Divine Lawgiver himself, who came among them, almost from day to day, as a personal sovereign.

A peculiar significance attaches to this constant personal manifestation of Jehovah to the Hebrew mind. The great, the almost inevitable drift of mind under the sole guidance of nature, is towards a polytheistic faith. Polytheism, in some form, may be said to be the natural religion of all the simpler and more untutored races. But, from the ensnaring influence and control of this polytheism,—this manifold nature-worship,—it was, first of all, necessary that the chosen people of God should be extricated. Monotheism was to become the natural and habitual posture of their minds: they must be brought to believe inflexibly in the grand truth so emphatically announced by their great human law-giver; “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.”*

“We do not realize how hard this was to acquire, be-

* Deut. vi. 4.

cause we have never had to acquire it; and, in reading the Old Testament, we look on the repeated idolatries of the chosen people as wilful backslidings from an elementary truth within the reach of children, rather than as stumblings in learning a very difficult lesson,—difficult even for cultivated men. In reality, elementary truths are the hardest to learn, unless we pass our childhood in an atmosphere thoroughly impregnated with them; and then we imbibe them unconsciously, and find it difficult to perceive their difficulty.”*

Now, there is no reason to believe that a faith in one living and true God, would ever have become deeply rooted in the Jewish mind, had it not been for the frequent miraculous manifestations of God to His people, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, during their introduction into the Promised Land, and at intervals during the long and checkered period of their subsequent history. Besides these, the law was a schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ. It revealed Jehovah as one, living, personal, holy sovereign; it declared by many solemn utterances and impressive rites, the sinfulness of man and the necessity of an atoning sacrifice; and it pointed by many sacred institutions and august ceremonies,—indeed by the entire constitution of that wonderful theocracy, to the coming Messiah.

To all this was added the power of prophetic revelation. Of the force and importance of this element, the words of Neander are strikingly suggestive. “All great events which have introduced a new development in human history, have been preceded by conscious or unconscious prophecy. This may seem strange to such as ascribe to God the apathy of the stoics; or to such as believe in a cold, iron necessity of an immanent Spirit of Nature.

* Essays and Reviews, page 13.

But to none who believe in a personal self-conscious Deity,—a God of eternal love, who is nigh unto every man, and listens willingly to the secret sighs of longing souls, can it appear unworthy of such a Being to respond to great world-historical epochs, by responding to such longings, in special revelations.”*

This remark holds good, in the highest degree, of that greatest epoch in human history,—the incarnation of the only begotten Son of God. During the ages preceding the birth of Christ, the whole human world was travailing in pain with one great hope, dim and half-unconscious in the earlier generations, but growing more definite and intense, as the time for its fulfillment approached. Whether we attribute its existence to traditions handed down from primeval generations, or to sporadic revelations sometimes vouchsafed to the Gentiles, or to the dispersion of the Jews, enlightened as they were, by the spirit of prophecy, or to the instinctive yearnings of natural religion in the human heart; we know that such a hope pervaded even the pagan world, long before the angelic song thrilled the awe-struck shepherds of Bethlehem. The noblest of all Greek minds, “the divine Plato,” expressed in language which seems almost prophetic, the desire and expectation of an inspired teacher, and the certainty of his rejection and ignominious death. We learn, also, not only from Josephus, but from two Roman historians, Tacitus and Suetonius, that about the time of our Lord’s advent a rumor was spread abroad over all the East, of the speedy coming of a great King who should reign over all the world. These yearnings of the pagan mind were what Neander calls unconscious prophecy.

It was, however, in the Hebrew race, that the longings of humanity for a divine Redeemer were shaped by the

* Neander’s “Life of Christ,” page 21.

spirit of prophecy into definite and earnest expectation. From the hoary centuries, echoes of prophetic song reach our ears,—at first far-off and faint, but growing deep and clear, and many-voiced along the nearer sweep of the descending stream of the ages. Abraham sees the day of Christ and is glad. Moses, from the cloud and flame of Sinai, stretches forth his hand to point the chosen people to the coming world-prophet. David sweeps his wondrous harp with a bolder hand, as he sings of the coming King who shall have dominion from sea to sea, so long as the moon endureth. At length, “the bard of bards,” the sublime Isaiah, takes up the strain. When the lark, from her lowly nest in the meadow, descries the first pale ray of dawn in the heavens, she springs upward above the mountain summits into the kindling azure, and there, under the edge of some rosy cloud,

“Singing, singing,
The clouds and the sky about her ringing,”

welcomes the sun, and with the morning star is co-herald of the day: so this wondrous seer soared above the shadows of earth and caught bright glimpses of the rising sun of righteousness. Hark! clear, solemn, exultant is his song: “Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”* Later prophets,—Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi,—take up the same great strain, with varied and unequal, yet divine melody. Thus we may think of the approach of the Deliverer, as of the progress of some mighty prince, the liberator of an oppressed nation, proclaimed by watchmen on the mountain heights, who successively catch and transmit the flying joy, till a con-

* Isaiah ix. 6.

continent is blazing with bonfires and shaken by acclamations. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation."*

As the mighty work of preparation advanced to its consummation, the world was agitated with presentiments of vast, mysterious changes approaching. Externally, however, the world was quiet: the nations lay without a struggle in the iron embrace of the great Roman despotism. So successfully had Augustus wielded the tremendous forces of the empire, that the temple of Janus was shut for twelve years,—a fact of great significance in its relation to the advent of the Prince of Peace.

In the meantime, the spiritual world was not indifferent to the near approach of this great event, so pre-eminent in the history, not of the earth alone, but also of the whole universe. It is clear from many allusions in the Scriptures, that fallen spirits were watching with trembling concern for the manifestation of the "*Seed of the woman*," of whom it had been foretold that he should bruise the head of the serpent; and that, about this time, they made a mighty effort to gain entire possession of the bodies and the souls of men. Multitudes of demoniacs appear to have wandered over the earth, and especially over the Holy Land, and infernal signs and wonders everywhere astonished and deluded the people. On the other hand, heaven was full of joyous expectation. The eyes of an innumerable company of angels were turned toward the earth, watching the progress of these august events, and looking for the birth of Him who was to reign supreme over all their resplendent hosts. Thus, "the fulness of the time" had come,—heaven and earth were waiting—all things were ready.

* Isaiah lii. 7.

PART II.

The Birth and Early Life
of Jesus.

CHAPTER I.

THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

THE MOTHER OF JESUS—HER CHARACTER—NECESSARY REVERENCE FOR THE CHARACTER OF MARY—IDEA THAT SHE WAS A MERE ORDINARY WOMAN, UNREASONABLE—CORRECT VIEW OF HER SINLESSNESS, AS OPPOSED TO THE DOGMA OF THE “IMMACULATE CONCEPTION”—MARY THE CONSUMMATE FLOWER OF WOMANHOOD—ALLEGORICAL ILLUSTRATION OF HER RELATIONS TO THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN AS FOUND IN JESUS—PRACTICAL APPLICATION SUGGESTED.

THE mother of Jesus was a virgin of Nazareth, in Galilee. Though of lowly condition, she was of David's line. Of her previous history, nothing is known except that she had been espoused to Joseph, a carpenter, who was himself of royal descent. Mary was living a secluded and peaceful life, the purest, meekest, holiest of all the daughters of earth. Though her nature, being *human* nature, was defiled, she was prepared by special sanctifying grace, for the transcendent honor to which she was elected, that of maternity to the incarnate Word. “Her employment was holy and pious, her person young, her years florid and springing, her mind humble and a rare repository of divine graces.”*

A true faith in the incarnation, and reverence for “God manifest in the flesh,” can not but engender a profound love and veneration for the Virgin Mother. We can not in the same breath pronounce Jesus sinless and divine, and speak of Mary as we do of other women. That she

* Jeremy Taylor.

was chosen to an office and an honor so absolutely unique as that of maternity to the "only begotten Son of God," implies a purity, and a fulness of grace in her, which exalts her far above all the daughters of Eve. That flesh, of which the body of the "Holy One" was moulded, must have been supernaturally prepared and sanctified: it was *immaculate*, not in any Romish sense, but by the plenary indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

There are those who hold that Mary was a woman of ordinary human frailty and imperfection, not more entitled to veneration than other pious persons of her sex; and who, perhaps, will shrink with horror from the language just employed. But surely, they can have no proper conception of the Incarnation; they can not have deeply pondered the mystery that Mary's child was, by an ineffable generation, the Son of the Highest; and that she nourished and nurtured the GOD-MAN. It can not be that we err in the belief that such a relation to God and redemption, implies a degree of sanctity in Mary to which no other woman ever attained.

The Romish dogma of the "Immaculate Conception," which will, doubtless, occur to the reader, is only an extravagant exaggeration of a great truth which we *feel*, even while we confess our inability to define it in logical terms. We may well hesitate to say that the Virgin Mother was free from all taint of original sin; but we can not bring ourselves to assert, on the other hand, that she was a sinner. She was in such sense sinless, that no taint of corruption was or could be transmitted by her to her offspring,—that "HOLY THING" which was born of her. It seems necessary to admit that she was the perfect flower of womanhood; the beautiful, crowning result of that development of the chosen seed which took place under age-long, divine culture.

They say there is a plant, which, at the end of a hun-

dred years, produces a surpassingly lovely flower, and never blooms again. I was about to say—God forgive my unthinking rashness,—that such a flower was the man Christ Jesus. But we must not think of humanity as putting forth, by its own inherent virtue, such wisdom, such purity, such beauty of holiness. Let us rather think of Christ as springing up, in the course of a true historical development, but a development, determined and carried on by a supernatural training; and, at last, by a stupendous miracle, heightened into a positive though incomprehensible union of the human with the Divine. The consummation of this training of humanity, and the manifestation of this union of humanity with the Divine must be found in the Virgin Mother.

The thought may, perhaps, be better represented by an allegory than by any formal statement. Let us take the following as adapted to our purpose: Among the plants that grew in the garden of Eden, was one so wondrous fair that the angels came flying in troops to gaze at it. Its fragrance filled all the garden, and made the winds faint with pleasure. Once on a time, a foul demon stole into the garden and breathed upon the plant, and its beauty withered, and its fragrance was changed to poisonous exhalations. Then the decree went forth that it should no longer grow in Eden's soil; and the angels, by permission, transplanted it to the lower world and affectionately tended it there; for they remembered what it had once been. But it was sickly and drooping; and, though it could not utterly die, year after year, age after age elapsed, and it put forth neither flowers nor fruit, but was covered with thorns and unsightly excrescences. But the angels never grew weary; for they had been certified that, in the fulness of time, it should put forth a flower more sweet and beautiful than it had borne in Paradise. So they pruned it, and dug around its roots,

and watered it with dews brought from its native Eden. After some ages it began to show signs of increasing vitality; its leaves were greener, and, among them were sometimes found sweet flower-buds, which, however, dropped off without unfolding. Thus the ages wore on, and the plant grew into a stately and vigorous tree. Yet, at the end of four thousand years no blossom appeared on its branches; and the angels whispered sadly, one to another: "How long?" But the time had come. In heaven, close to the throne of God, grows the amaranth,—immortal tree, drawing its life from Him who sitteth upon the throne. And now there was a wonder in heaven. Forth from the throne there came a *Dove*,—how white and pure words can not tell,—and plucked a bud from the amaranth, and bore it to the earth. Standing around their beloved tree, the angels saw the *Dove* hovering over it. Selecting the fairest bough—the bough nearest heaven,—the Dove drew close, and by some unknown, wondrous art, fastened the bud upon it, and disappeared. And, lo! the bud grew to the tree, and even while they gazed, burst forth into such miraculous bloom that all heaven came trooping to behold its wondrous loveliness. And as they stood around it in jubilant armies and wondered and adored, God himself looked down well pleased on the plant HUMANITY, and loved it for the sake of the flower that grew upon it, which the angels called JESUS.

Looking, now, at the Virgin Mother as holding, in the sublime scheme of redemption, so peculiar a relation to both the divine and human, we can not but feel that she was singularly blessed among women, and worthy to be held, throughout all time, in profound love and reverence. In her was found the only perfect womanhood. In her MATERNITY was glorified. Through the divine favor, she brought upon mankind salvation and blessing. May we not believe that in it all, she was empowered to teach men

through all time, truths pertaining to womanhood, at once touching and profound?

And this we say with deep and solemn earnestness. For we can not see how, with any just conception of womanhood as sublimed and honored in the Mother of Jesus, it can appear other than most astonishing and painful that woman, with the gospel in her hands, can, for the sake of mere fashion and frivolity, or under the base spur of an unsexed ambition, turn aside from the serene and noble example of Mary's domestic simplicity and purity, matronly dignity and fidelity, and feel neither the obligation nor the desire to emulate it. Nor can we see how, with the light of Mary's worth and loveliness reflected upon the sex, society can justify itself in withholding from woman any means of culture, which it puts within reach of man; or how it can screen itself from the charge of inhumanity in neglecting, upon any pretense whatever, to protect her life and her virtue against the oppressive exactions of the avaricious, and the seductive arts of the profligate.

The character and mission of the Virgin Mother can not but awaken a profound conviction of the unmitigated baseness of those arts which are employed to ensnare and debase a nature in itself so lovely, and once so wonderfully owned of God, as capable and worthy of being made the fit maternal mould of the humanity of His Divine Son. Under a thoughtful consideration of the purity and glory which the sex attained in her, it surely can not be possible for a man or woman born, to view with other than feelings of horror, all that sensuality and vice in the community, which are daily dragging down multitudes of Mary's younger sisters, to depths of pollution and infamy, from the contemplation of which the mind starts back with loathing and horror.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH AND RECOGNITION OF JESUS.

THE ANNUNCIATION TO MARY—HER SEEMING DOUBT—MARY'S JOURNEY TO SEE ELIZABETH—MEETING OF THE TWO WOMEN—MARY'S RETURN, AND JOSEPH'S DOUBTS—DIVINE VINDICATION OF THE VIRGIN—THE TAXING UNDER AUGUSTUS—JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM, AND BIRTH OF CHRIST—FITNESS OF THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHRIST'S BIRTH TO THE SHEPHERDS—THE SHEPHERDS' VISIT TO BETHLEHEM, AND DISCOVERY OF JESUS—CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS, AND HIS PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE—RECOGNITION OF JESUS BY SIMEON—PROPHETIC WORDS OF SIMEON TO MARY—RECOGNITION BY THE PROPHETESS ANNA.

NEAR the end of the reign of Herod the Great, the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary with a divine message. He saluted her thus ; "Hail, thou that art highly favored ; the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women !"* Mary was startled and troubled by this appearance and unexpected address of a celestial messenger. But the angel calmed her perturbation, saying ; "Fear not, Mary ; for thou hast found favor with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son ; and thou shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David ; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever ; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."†

This announcement awoke in Mary's mind, what might at first be taken for a doubt. But her question ; "How shall this be ?" was not suggested by unbelief like that of Zacharias,‡ or Sarah,§ but by a childlike innocence

* Luke i. 28. † Luke i. 30-33. ‡ Luke i. 18. § Gen. xviii. 12.

that sought to realize to itself, in the very face of seeming impossibilities, the full assurance of its own blessedness.* Instead of a rebuke, therefore, the angel was permitted to give her this explicit answer:—"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."—"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."† And it was unto her, according to the word of the angel.

Conscious of the ineffable miracle wrought upon her by the creative power of God, and longing perhaps for sympathy such as she could not find at Nazareth, Mary arose and went with haste to a city of the priests,—probably Jutta, in the hill country of Judea,—where dwelt her aged cousin Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias. The journey,—not less than one hundred miles,—was, for a maiden, long and toilsome, if not dangerous. She, however, probably traveled under adequate protection, and was doubtless sustained by a serene confidence in God. Besides, she was moved by an eager desire to commune with Elizabeth, who was herself,—as Mary had been told by the angel,—the subject of a supernatural influence which had renewed her youth, and made her capable of a late but glorious maternity.

The meeting of these two women was touching and memorable. They were conscious of divine mysteries which were hidden from all the world beside. What wonder that, exalted as they were by this consciousness, and speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, their joy broke forth in inspired canticles which have passed into the heart and the worship of the universal church? And if such was their joy upon their first meeting, what

* Ellicott's Life of Christ, page 59.

† Luke i. 35, 38.

seasons of sweetest interchange of thought and feeling, and of fervent communion with the Highest, must have marked the three months thus passed by Mary with Elizabeth!

Returning, at length, to Nazareth, the blessed Virgin encountered her first great trial, of the certain approach of which she had been, as it would seem, wholly oblivious. Joseph, her espoused husband, was eminently just and conscientious, and not at all predisposed to uncharitable suspicion. But a fact was now forced upon his notice, which shocked his moral sense, and disturbed all his previous impressions of her character. That he suffered intensely we cannot doubt; and the resolution to which he came, after painful deliberation, was not unworthy of the man. He shrank from bringing Mary to open shame, and therefore determined to put her away privately without assigning any cause.

Mary left her vindication to God, who communicated to Joseph, in a dream, the immaculate purity and transcendent glory of his espoused wife. The fact is highly suggestive, that, while God communicated with the Virgin through the direct agency of a heavenly messenger, in the case of Joseph the revelation is made by means of a dream at night.* Joseph, however, heeded the heavenly intimation thus given, and took the Virgin at once under his immediate protection.

Our history here suddenly opens a vista into the great world. It gives us a glimpse of that most consummate statesman and politician of ancient times, the Emperor Augustus. Appreciating above all others the value of accurate statistics, he often ordered the census of particular provinces, and three times, at least, that of the whole Empire. The particular census recorded by the evan-

* Ellicott's "Life of Christ," page 65,



BETHLEHEM.

gelist Luke, though not mentioned by Roman historians, is in itself highly probable, from the known policy of Augustus, and from the political relations of the Kingdom of Judea to the Empire. During the first administration of Cyrenius, or Quirinus, as Governor of Syria,* the Emperor ordered a general census of the countries under his rule, partly to obtain correct statistics, and partly to prepare the way for general and systematic taxation. As Judea was then, though nominally independent, really a dependency of the Empire; and as Augustus probably already meditated reducing it to the condition of a province, he required King Herod to take its census. This was, of course, done according to Jewish usage,—that is to say, by tribes and families.

In accordance with the decree of Augustus, Joseph and Mary, being of the house of David, repaired to Bethlehem, the original seat of the house. Finding the inn, or caravansera, overflowing with people who had come there on the same errand, they took up their temporary abode in a stable, said to have been a grotto hewn from the rock. There was born, about four years before our era,—in what month and on what day is unknown,—the Wondrous Child in whom the whole world was new-born. That event,—the greatest of all history,—was unnoticed by the world. In the palaces of kings, in the cabinets of statesmen, in the camps of warriors, none dreamed that old things were passed away, and all things were become new. Only in the world of superhuman intelligences, was there a vivid consciousness of the grandeur of the event.

Leaving the child Jesus in the manger in which He was laid, let us go, in imagination, to the neighboring fields,—

*It is now well-nigh demonstrated, that Cyrenius was *twice* governor of Syria, and that the taxing took place during his first term.—*Andrews' "Life of our Lord,"* page 6.

possibly in the fruitful plain below—probably on the green, rolling hills beyond,*—where certain shepherds are watching their flocks. It is night, and we can not but picture to ourselves the terraced hill-sides, gray with olive orchards and with outcropping rocks, as softened and beautified by the moonlight. All nature sleeps, pure and peaceful, under the holy heavens. On a green mound sits a company of shepherds, devout and 'godly men, rehearsing, it may be, some of those psalms of David which were composed so long ago on these very hill-sides, and in the valley below; or, perhaps, talking together concerning the Kingdom of God, and the consolation of Israel. They are worthy successors of that youthful shepherd who, perhaps, on such a night as this, looked up from this very spot, to the same resplendent sky, and sang to his wondrous harp: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?" †

It was fitting that the glad tidings from heaven, of a Saviour born, should be first proclaimed, not to the ceremonial Pharisee, who would have questioned it; not to the worldly, scoffing Sadducee, who would have reviled it; not to the mystic schismatical Essene, who would have perverted it, but to these simple shepherds, these holy watchers, whose devout and susceptible hearts would at once recognize the communication as from God, and receive it with holy joy. ‡

And so, in the grace of God, they were privileged above not only these, but above even the "Sweet Singer of

* Tradition locates the scene in the valley, about a mile out of Bethlehem; but recent travelers incline to the latter view taken in the text.—*Smith's Bible Dictionary, in loco*. See also Stanley.

† Psalm viii. 3, 4.

‡ Ellieott's "Life of Christ," page 72

Israel;" for, as they tended their flocks, "Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men."*

The angelic song having ceased, the charmed and wondering listeners hasten to Bethlehem, and find the heavenly vision fulfilled: the Babe lies before them in a manger. With what acts of adoration they approached that holy presence; in what words they expressed their wonder and joy, the record tells us not. That they worshiped their new-born King, we can not doubt. We would fain, with them, enter that lowly shed where the Virgin Mother watches over her Child. But we dare not, like Roman Catholic writers, lift the veil, which inspired history has drawn around that Holy Family. The hallowed seclusion of the Saviour's infancy was ordained by God himself, and must not be violated by even a devout imagination.

One fact, however, is recorded, which is of great importance. It is that in accordance with the law Jesus was circumcised the eighth day; for he "was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."† The law required, also, that the Jewish mother, when her infant was forty days old, should present herself in the temple and offer sacrifices for her purification, and for the redemption of her first-

* Luke ii. 9-14.

† Rom. xv. 8.

born. Mary and Joseph had no dispensation from the letter of the law,—Jesus from his birth must fulfill all righteousness. Hence, the Holy Family went, at the prescribed time, to Jerusalem.

And now the “Desire of all nations comes to His temple;” lying a helpless infant in his mother’s arms, He is unrecognized except by two devout persons, who were supernaturally enlightened to discern in that Infant the long-expected Messiah. The aged and inspired Simeon, to whom it had been revealed that he should not die till he had seen the Lord’s Christ, coming into the temple while Mary was there, and seeing the Babe, knew that his hopes were fulfilled. Taking the infant Jesus with the utmost tenderness in his arms, he blessed God, and said: “Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”* These words, which have been called the “swan song of the Old Covenant,” express a conception of the Messiah and His kingdom so much in advance of the common Jewish idea, that even Joseph and Mary were filled with wonder.

Perceiving their surprise, Simeon turned to them and blessed them. He addressed the Virgin Mother especially, in prophetic words which must have sounded in her heart many years afterwards, when she followed her Divine Son to Calvary, scarcely a thousand paces from the spot where she then stood:—“Behold this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also;) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”†

As if God would specially include both sexes in the

* Luke ii. 29–32.

† Luke ii. 34, 35.

same honor and blessedness, while Simeon was yet speaking, an aged prophetess, named Anna, came in to the temple. Distinguished by her purity of life, and the severity as well as the devoutness of her services in the house of the Lord, the blessed gift of spiritual perception was bestowed on her also. Recognizing the Messiah in the Child Jesus, she broke out in thanksgiving to God, and with devout and holy words "spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Having thus, in every particular, fulfilled the law, the Holy Family returned to Bethlehem.

CHAPTER III.

JESUS, THE WORD INCARNATE.

THE TRUE HUMANITY OF JESUS—HIS HUMAN LINEAGE AND ATTRIBUTES—
HIS DIVINE SONSHIP—THE GOD-MAN—STRAUSS' PANTHEISTIC DOCTRINE
OF THE INCARNATION OF GOD IN COLLECTIVE HUMANITY—RATIONAL-
ISM SELF-REFUTED AND SILENCED—NECESSITY OF THE INCARNATION.

LET us, in this place, meditate a little while on the DIVINE CHILD whose birth at Bethlehem we have pronounced the grandest event in the annals of time.

Who was the wondrous PERSON whose birth was thus heralded and announced by angels? He is presented to our view, in the sacred history, as a man. He comes into the world by natural birth; His infancy is weak and helpless, like that of other men; He is subject to the laws of human development; He is liable to hunger and thirst, infirmity and pain; even to mental limitation and suffering, though not to sin. His manhood therefore was real and no illusion. Yet what a chasm between Him and all other men! He was indeed descended from Adam; He was the seed of Abraham, and the heir of David; but there was a divine element in His lineage which made Him the root as well as the offspring of David; the Lord as well as the child of Abraham; the Son of God as well as the Son of Adam. His humanity was truly moulded in the womb of Mary; He took flesh of her flesh; but "His generation who shall declare?" This we know, that He was incarnate by the power of the Holy Ghost; that

He was the Word made flesh; that He was God become man. Let us not think of Him as *a* man created by divine power and then taken into intimate union with God—not as God and a man morally united—but as GOD-MAN. The Infant of Bethlehem was “God of God, Light of Light.” That tiny form entemples all the fullness of the Godhead; it is the true holy of holies wherein God personally dwells and will dwell henceforth, even forever. There is the Well-Spring of life for a dead world; there is the Light of men, the Sun of truth and wisdom; there is the image of the invisible God, and the brightness of His glory; there is the Lord God our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the Saviour! Yes,—we adore Thee, Son of the Virgin, Son of God! Seeing Thee we see the Father! We worship Thee, in whom God is become man and man is taken into God!

Does such a union of the infinite and the finite, of the eternal and the temporal, of the divine and the human, seem incomprehensible? It *is* incomprehensible; the Scriptures declare that it is the “great mystery of godliness.” We can not hope to understand it, in any scientific sense, even in eternity. It is to be apprehended by faith alone; for “spiritual things are spiritually discerned.” Nevertheless, there is a mystery equally impenetrable in all the workings of the creative Word. The recent assailants of Christianity assert the same relation between God and *the race* which believers assert between the divine and human in the person of Christ. Take the following illustrative extract from an essay by Strauss, author of the notorious “Life of Jesus,”—“In the idea of the race, the properties and functions which the church doctrine ascribes to Christ agree. *Humanity* is the union of the two natures,—the incarnate God, the Infinite externalizing itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude. It is the Child of the visible mother

and the invisible father, Nature and Spirit; it is the worker of miracles, in so far as in the course of human history the spirit more and more completely subjugates nature both within and around man, until it lies before him as an inert matter of his activity; it is the sinless existence, for the course of its development is a blameless one: pollution cleaves to the individual only, and does not touch the race or its history." Those who thus reason are estopped from objecting against the incarnation. Pantheism, in this case, has refuted itself and muzzled its own blaspheming mouth. Those who assert that *every* man, even the most depraved, is God manifest in the flesh, might, one would think, easily concede the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ. In fact, however, reason can not deal with problems of this kind.

The necessity of the incarnation can be understood by all. If the moral renovation of mankind could only be effected by the clear revelation of a personal God—the revelation of ESSENTIAL LOVE; if the redemption of humanity could only proceed from a new creation—a new birth—of human nature, in a second Adam, the father of a regenerate race; if fallen man could not even conceive, much less realize, perfect human excellence, except by the life and death of a sinless man; if the human conscience, burdened with sin, could only find peace in an infinite vicarious sacrifice; if communion between God and man could only be restored by a Mediator;—then was it necessary that the eternal Son of God should dwell on earth in human flesh.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MISSION OF THE "WISE MEN FROM THE EAST."

HEROD THE GREAT—HIS CHARACTER—THE PROBABILITY AS TO HIS RECEPTION OF THE NEWS OF CHRIST'S ADVENT—THE "WISE MEN FROM THE EAST"—MESSIANIC IDEAS PROBABLY CURRENT IN THE EAST—SEARCH OF THE "WISE MEN" FOR JESUS—HERODS ARTFUL INQUIRY AND INSTRUCTIONS—THE "WISE MEN" AT BETHLEHEM—THEIR SECRET DEPARTURE, AND THE CONSEQUENT FURY OF HEROD—THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS—DIVINE RETRIBUTIVE VISITATION OF HEROD—THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT—RETURN OF THE HOLY FAMILY TO PALESTINE—SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FACT OF THIS GENTILE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SAVIOUR'S ADVENT—INACTIVITY OF THE JEWS EXPLAINED—RELATION OF THESE FACTS TO THE FUTURE OF THE GENTILE NATIONS.

HEROD THE GREAT, king of Judea, fills a wide space in the history of the East, during the half-century preceding the birth of Jesus. Though of Idumean blood, he was a native of the country, and at least affected to be of the Jewish religion. The Idumeans, indeed, had been compelled to submit to circumcision several generations before, and were now hardly distinguishable from the Jews with whom they were largely amalgamated. Antipater, Herod's father, had been a sort of mayor of the palace to Hyrcanus II., the last of the illustrious line of Asmonean princes. He was one of the most astute politicians of his time, and was, besides, a brave and skilful soldier. Under Julius Cæsar, he was procurator of Syria, and thus laid the foundation for the glory of his house. His son, Herod, after many conflicts and perils, gained the crown while he was yet a young man, and kept possession of it till his death, reigning about forty years. He was undoubtedly

a man of splendid genius,—brave, eloquent, sagacious, accomplished, and by no means deficient in statesmanship. Neither was he indifferent to the well-being of his kingdom, which, notwithstanding his tyranny, teemed with population, and enjoyed extraordinary agricultural and commercial prosperity. History portrays him as generous and affectionate, yet suspicious and cruel; as passionately attached to his friends, yet capricious and faithless; as impetuous and headlong, yet hypocritical and crafty. He obtained the crown by adulation and bribery of the Romans, and, notwithstanding his successful administration, he drew upon himself by a series of unnatural and unparalleled crimes, the abhorrence of his subjects, and of the world. These crimes all sprang from a morbid suspicion and jealousy which bordered on insanity. He barbarously murdered his brother-in-law, Aristobulus, (a noble youth of seventeen, whom he himself had raised to the high priesthood,) because he was a favorite of the people. He put to death his own brother, Joseph, because he suspected him, without reason, of undue familiarity with his wife. He slew Hyrcanus, his father-in-law and former sovereign, after he had decoyed him from a distant country to Jerusalem. He even sacrificed Mariamne, his beautiful queen, under the instigation of a furious and insane jealousy which was deaf to justice and common sense. It is recorded that after her death he was seized by a remorse that seemed supernatural. He continually called upon her name, and for a long time abode in the desert. He murdered his three sons, Alexander, Aristobulus, and Antipater, when he himself was in the agonies of a horrible death. Conscious that he was held in universal detestation, and that his death would be the signal for national rejoicing, he summoned the noblest of the Jews to Jericho, where he lay dying, and gave strict orders that at the moment of his decease, they should all

be slaughtered. "This," said he, "will provide for my funeral all over the land, and make every family in the kingdom lament my death."

This gloomy, suspicious, and cruel tyrant reigned in Judea when our Lord was born. He was now seventy years old, a prey to disease, suspicion, and all those malignant passions which his hot Edomite blood, and unrestrained indulgence from his youth, had made ungovernable as a savage or a wild beast. Picture him in his splendid palace at Jerusalem, haunted by the ghosts of his murdered victims, distrusting his subjects, afraid of insurrection and revolution, perhaps of assassination, and dreading above all, an outbreak of the long suppressed Jewish fanaticism touching the Messiah, whose advent was now daily expected. This expectation was not confined to the Jews alone, but was shared by certain Gentile sages in the distant East.

This story of the Wise Men is wonderfully interesting and beautiful. They are said to have come from "the East." The phrase is vague and seems to invite conjecture. The most probable opinion is that the country intended is the great valley of the Euphrates. Among the Chaldeans the Magi constituted a sacred caste or order, held in the highest estimation, and endowed with great wealth and peculiar privileges. They are not to be confounded with the magicians of later ages, so infamous for their vices and lying wonders. They seem to have been highly educated, and to have exercised their functions with a conscientious regard to the principles of the occult sciences which they professed. When Nebuchadnezzar demanded of them a proof of supernatural knowledge, they made no attempt to satisfy him with a trick, but honestly confessed their ignorance. When Daniel was made their president, it does not appear that he found his connection with them a cause of embarrassment or trouble.

If, as there is reason to believe, the majority of this order were Medes and Persians, they were not idolaters, but monotheists, predisposed to accept the leading principles of Judaism. We know that afterwards, when the kingdom passed to the Medes and Persians, the Jews found in Cyrus their friend and patron. It is probable that the prophecies of Daniel were known to the Magi, or Wise Men, with whom he was so long associated, and by them the leading ideas of those prophecies were transmitted to their successors. It is not unlikely that the Persian doctrine concerning a Zoziosh, or Saviour, who should raise the dead and judge the world, had its origin in the prophecy of Daniel. It may even be true that the celebrated Zoroaster lived at that time; but whether earlier or later, he must have come in contact with Jews. He may have conversed with Ezra or Nehemiah or Ezekiel. Perhaps he had read the law and the prophets. This we know,—that the Eastern Magi for generations expected a Saviour—a great King, who should rule all nations. The Wise Men of our history had probably been taught to look for this event, since there is every reason to believe that the order had maintained a corporate existence down to the time of Christ.

Let us then picture to ourselves these Wise Men, not as strolling soothsayers and magicians, but as devout worshipers of the one living and true God. They were entangled in great errors; but their faith was sincere, and God regarded them with special favor. We are compelled to believe that, Gentiles as they were, and adherents to a religion opposed in many of its doctrines to the truth as revealed to the chosen people, they were just and good men and under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. How else shall we account for their longing and watching for the coming of Christ? What was the origin of their faith that He was to be born in Judea, and to be King of

the Jews? They may have read the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel, or conversed with devout Jews in Persia; for the Jews swarmed through all the East, making proselytes even of kings and queens; but their unwavering *faith* must have come from above. It was a faith that *waited* and *watched* for the promised Messiah.

The Magi were sincere believers in astrology. They saw, or thought they saw, in the configurations of the starry heavens the signs of great events about to take place on the earth. In this belief all the foremost minds of the ancient world, including Julius Cæsar, participated. Even in modern and Christian times, many men of great intelligence and undoubted piety, have looked to the stars for indications of the future. The progress of reason has exploded this science falsely so called; but let us not imagine that all those who anciently had confidence in it were by that fact excluded from the special favor and spiritual illumination of that God who condescends to human weakness and error. In the language of another, "God condescends to the platforms of men in training them for belief in the Redeemer, and meets the aspirations of the truth-seeking soul even in its error. In the case of the Wise Men, a real truth, perhaps, lay at the bottom of the error; the truth, namely, that the greatest of all events, which was to produce the greatest revolution in humanity, is actually connected with the epochs of the material universe, although the links of the chain may be hidden from our view."

The whole culture of the Wise Men led them to seek a sign in the heavens of the advent of the Saviour. Suddenly a new star appears in the sky. They gaze upon it with awe mingled with rapture. Prompted by an inward impulse too strong to be resisted, they at once set out in search of Him who is born King of the Jews. Losing no time by the way, they speed on through the deserts, over

the mountains, across the Jordan, till they come to Jerusalem. They find, no doubt to their surprise, that the great event is utterly unknown in the capital of Judaism. They demand of Herod where they may find and worship the new-born king. The wily and suspicious monarch, himself not without a strong tincture of superstition, convenes the chief priests and scribes, and inquires of them where Christ should be born. There was at that time a conspiracy in Herod's own family, and extreme disaffection among the religious part of the nation. Herod's question was intended not merely to direct the executioners of his vengeance to the quarter from which danger was to be feared, but to force the authorized interpreters of the law and the prophets to a decisive statement as to the place and circumstances of the Messiah's birth; seeking if any event should occur contrary to their version of the prophecies, either to commit them on the side of the ruling powers, or to quench forever the hope that was now agitating the popular mind. The assembly—possibly the Sanhedrim itself—was at no loss for an answer; prophecy clearly pointed to Bethlehem as the chosen place. Herod, pretending the most lively interest in the matter, urged the Wise Men to prosecute their search, and if successful to bring him word, that he also might hasten to the cradle of his great successor.

The unsuspecting strangers joyfully journeyed to Bethlehem. They seem to have reached there in the night, for, lifting up their eyes for guidance, they again saw the star standing directly over the house where the Divine Infant lay. Was their faith staggered when they saw the object of their long search, not in a palace but in a lowly cottage—not surrounded with adoring multitudes but in the seclusion of a peasant's household—not reposing on cushions of silk and down under a golden canopy, but lying in a manger! No: they manifested neither surprise

nor doubt. "They saw the young Child, and Mary, His Mother, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." Those who say that the gold was an acknowledgment of His royalty, the frankincense of His priesthood, and the myrrh prophetic of the embalming of His body for burial, probably see more in the gifts than the Wise Men intended: but the fancy, if it be quite a fancy, is harmless and beautiful. After homage done to the Divine Child the sleep of those reverend men was holy; God himself visited them in their dreams, and warned them not to return to Herod. So they returned to their own country another way.

When the Wise Men left Jerusalem, Herod doubtless thought he had outwitted the heavens, thwarted divine predestination and taken a bond of fate. He had ascertained what time the star appeared; he had thence calculated the age of his infant rival; and he hoped, on the return of the strangers, to learn the very name and abode of one who might cause him or his dynasty serious trouble if not destruction. He waited impatiently for the tidings they were to bring; but when it became apparent that they had read his cruel purpose and eluded it by a secret departure, his rage knew no bounds. He would not thus be circumvented; he was king, and he resolved to accomplish his purpose, if not in one way then in another. The Child must, as he judged, have been born about the time the star appeared in the east, and must now be more than one, and less than two years old; in order, therefore, to make sure work, he sent his soldiers to Bethlehem with strict orders to put to death all the male children in the town and its suburbs under two years of age. How this cruel order was executed we are not told. We may conjecture that the parents were summoned to bring their children to a given place, as if to be numbered, or for some

similar purpose, and that then the massacre was perpetrated. The butchers of the tyrant made thorough work. There was mourning and lamentation in Bethlehem that day; many a fond heart was broken. Though the number slaughtered in that small rural village could not have been large, the atrocity of the deed made the ears of all who heard of it tingle.

The soldiers return and report to the hoary tyrant that his decree is executed to the letter. He flatters himself that the Holy Child is put out of the way; but what madness for a man, however powerful, to think of frustrating the decrees of the Almighty! The Child was safe, and Herod had in vain supped full of horrors. He was not long after seized with a loathsome and mortal disease. The description of that disease by Josephus is too horrible and disgusting to be quoted in these pages. Suffice it to say, that his sufferings of mind and body were so intolerable, that he was only saved from ending a life of monstrous crime by self-murder through the ceaseless vigilance of his attendants.

While the danger was impending over the Divine Child at Bethlehem, Joseph, warned by an angel in a dream, fled by night toward Egypt. The incidents of the journey, and of the sojourn in the land of the Pharaohs, are not recorded. Tradition marks the route of the holy pilgrims as lying through Hebron, Beersheba and the desert, and the place of their temporary abode as at or near Heliopolis, which was almost a Jewish city. All this, however, is legend, not history. Their stay in Egypt could not have been long,—probably not more than three or four months: the death of Herod terminated their exile. When Joseph knew from a supernatural intimation that the tyrant was no more, he returned with the mother and child to the land of Israel. It was his purpose to settle at Bethlehem, which seemed the proper residence

for David's Son and Heir; but hearing that Archelaus, a vicious and cruel prince, was reigning in Judea in the place of his father, Herod, he continued his journey to Galilee and took up his abode in Nazareth.

This portion of our history exhibits the infant Saviour in relations which proved prophetic to the Jews on the one hand, and the Gentiles on the other. How significant is it that the first intelligence of Christ's birth was communicated to the civil and ecclesiastical rulers of the chosen people by travel-stained Gentile strangers! We can see why the arrival of those venerable men from a distant land, and their great question: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" must have caused an immense sensation at Jerusalem; but it strikes one at first thought as unaccountable that they instituted no investigation; that they did not send messengers to the neighboring village of Bethlehem to verify the startling report which had come to them in so strange a way. A moment's reflection serves to clear up the mystery.

The priests and scribes would look on Gentile religionists with distrust and contempt. "Surely," they would say, "the tidings of the Messiah's birth would not be brought to Jerusalem and the temple by uncircumcised heathens. These men are lunatics or knaves." Or if they were inwardly inclined to attach some credence to their declarations, they were deterred from taking any measures in the premises, by fear of their jealous, blood-thirsty king. They knew so well his capricious and cruel temper that they felt themselves standing every moment on a volcano. They well knew that any interest which they might betray concerning the reported birth of their Messiah, would be regarded by him as a symptom of disaffection, perhaps as proof of conspiracy and treason. They therefore did nothing. When afterwards all the infants of Bethlehem were slain, they naturally thought

the whole affair a delusion. It remains true, however, that the gospel was first preached to the rulers of the Jewish church by Gentiles. The opportunity was given them to know their King in His cradle, and to offer Him their homage; but they rejected Him from the first.

The Gentiles, in these reverend and noble representatives, bowed before the infant Christ, their bright and morning star, in glad adoration. They had been under divine teaching. They had been made conscious of their great religious need; they had longed and prayed for a Saviour; and though entangled in great errors, they had true faith in God, and He rewarded that faith, by revealing to them, in a manner fitted to their culture and modes of thought, the glorious fact that the "Desire of nations" was already come. He vouchsafed to them a blessedness denied to patriarchs and prophets, that of seeing with their own eyes the "Light of the world." Thus early in the life of our Saviour did God distinctly intimate His purpose, to call all nations to the feast of redemption. And thus, too, was it foreshown that the Jews would reject their King, and be excluded from the feast till the fulness of the Gentiles should be brought in.

CHAPTER V.

THE INFANCY AND EARLY TRAINING OF JESUS.

NAZARETH—DR. ROBINSON'S REFLECTIONS AT NAZARETH—SCANTY RECORDS OF HIS INFANCY—EMPTINESS OF APOCRYPHAL AND ROMISH LEGENDS CONCERNING IT—OBJECTION TO THE STUDY OF THIS THEME INVALID—THE HUMAN NATURE IN JESUS, SUBJECT TO DEVELOPMENT—THIS DEVELOPMENT, THE RESULT OF AN INWARD FORCE—NOT UNAFFECTED, HOWEVER, BY HIS RELATIONS TO THE TIMES—HIS WISDOM NEVERTHELESS, UNBORROWED FROM TEACHERS, SCHOOLS OR SECTS—PROBABLE INFANTILE TRAINING UNDER MARY.

"CAN any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Thus asked an Israelite indeed, who lived in the neighboring village of Cana. Nazareth, from some cause, had an ill name; and this is perhaps the reason why we are apt to think of it without pleasure. It must have been, however, in the time of Christ as it is now, one of the most charming villages in Palestine. Travelers speak of its scenery in terms of glowing admiration. Embowered in vineyards, fig-trees, and hedges of prickly pear, and surrounded with gardens and fruitful fields, it nestles on the lower slope of an eminence in the south-western corner of a green and flowery valley, enclosed by fifteen gently rounded hills, which seem to guard it from intrusion. The hill which rises several hundred feet above the town, commands one of the most enchanting views in the world. Toward the west is seen Mount Carmel clearly defined against the gleaming blue of the Mediterranean; far to the north rises the white summit of Mount Hermon; as the eye sweeps the east, it rests on the round, bald top

of Tabor and on Little Hermon, while between them opens a view of the valley of the Jordan and of the highlands of Perea beyond; toward the south, stretches the fertile and historic plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon, to the mountains of Samaria and of Gilboa. Even now the country is well cultivated and productive; in the time of Herod it must have been among the richest and fairest in the Holy Land.

In this secluded and peaceful valley the childhood and youth of Jesus were passed. Here He received His human culture. All this beauty of earth and sky lay brooding on his soul from infancy. Says Dr. Robinson, in his journal: "Seating myself in the shade on the summit of the hill, I remained for some hours on this spot, lost in contemplation of the wide prospect, and of the events connected with the scenes around. In the village below, the Saviour of the world passed His childhood; and, though we have few particulars of His life during those early years, yet there are certain features of nature which meet our eyes as they once met His. He must often have visited yonder fountain; His feet must frequently have wandered over the adjacent hills, and His eyes doubtless gazed on the splendid prospect from this very spot. Here, the Prince of Peace looked down on the great plain, where the din of battles so oft has rolled, and the garments of the warriors been dyed in blood; and He looked out too, on that sea over which the swift ships were to bear the tidings of His salvation to nations and to continents then unknown."

We can scarcely repress the wish, prompted by loving curiosity, that the evangelists had given us one glimpse of the Holy Family in their humble home at Nazareth. Could we but see the Child Jesus among the vineyards and olive orchards, and listen to one conversation between Him and His Virgin Mother! Surely *John* was familiar with that home and its inmates. Why did he not lift the

veil? The inspired history, however, was not given to gratify even a laudable curiosity; but for infinitely higher purposes. The reticence of the evangelists is a proof of their inspiration. The Apocryphal Gospels are full of legends concerning our Lord's childhood; but they are so puerile and grotesque that they do not merit serious notice in such a work as this. The Romish legend touching the miraculous transportation of the house in which the Holy Family dwelt, from Nazareth to Loretto, where it is now shown,—a legend confirmed by infallible papal bulls,—must also be passed by in “expressive silence.” The throng of pilgrims who daily kiss the marble-cased walls and pavement of that house, would be more sure of finding Him whom they “ignorantly worship,” by seeking Him in His living Word. The inspired memorials of our Lord's childhood are indeed very scanty, but they furnish abundant food for meditation.

While we view the Divine Child in His earthly environment and amidst His human associations and employments, special caution is needed lest our sense of His majesty as the Son of God, and of the mystery of His incarnation should be diminished. Some, indeed,* warn us against any inquiry into our Lord's human development as a step toward that naturalism which refuses to recognize the Divine in His manifestations. But the gospels certainly speak of His growth in wisdom as well as in stature, without any hint touching the danger of a reverent attempt to understand what is meant by that growth; and the wisest theologians since the apostolic age have deemed it a legitimate subject of speculation. When the eternal Word was made flesh, He assumed a *real* humanity, not an illusive appearance or phantasm. The physiological and mental laws which regulate the devel-

* See Ellicott, page 90.

opment of manhood in other individuals had their full and natural operation in the Child Jesus. "And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."* This certainly implies that Jesus passed by a true human development, from the weakness of infancy to the full strength of His glorious manhood.

But the unfolding of His human faculties was the result of an inward force, a force, not of external circumstances, but of the indwelling Word. He was, hence, free from all taint of natural corruption, and therefore, from all the moral causes of darkness and error. All the parts, faculties, and impulses of His organization, were pure, healthy, and well-balanced. Born into a world of sin, He grew up to a perfect manhood, by a light and energy which we ascribe to the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily. We are not, therefore, at liberty to conceive of His mind and character as *formed* by circumstances,—as resulting from such culture as He received from men, or from the ideas and spirit of the age. He was in no sense produced by His time. Yet He stood in certain relations to the modes of thought, the laws and institutions of the nation to which He belonged. He had His place in the historical development of the chosen people, and of the world. We need not therefore deny that His development was in some degree modified, though not determined, by the facts of nature around Him, by His condition in life, by His employments, by His companions, and by the direct instruction which He received.

Notwithstanding this, even infidels are compelled to acknowledge that He learned nothing from schools and sects. His doctrines were so utterly at variance with the dead orthodoxy, the rigid formalism, and the arid, tradi-

* Luke ii. 40.

tional subtleties of the Pharisees; and with the stolid materialism and sneering infidelity of the Sadducees, that we can not for a moment suppose that He was ever influenced by the teachers of those dominant sects. It is just as difficult to associate Him with the ascetic Essenes, whose mysticism, and abhorrence of oaths, and opposition to the more influential sects, have been thought to present strong points of resemblance to the teachings of Christ; but whose monastic seclusion and unsocial manners preclude the supposition that they made any impression on the mind and character of the youthful Jesus. The suggestion of a late writer* that Persian ideas had in some way found their way into that illuminated mind, is too absurd to deserve refutation. Jesus sat at the feet of no Jewish Rabbi: He learned wisdom from no heathen sage. Greece and Rome brought Him nothing: it does not even appear that their languages were known to Him. His townsmen regarded Him as ignorant of letters, and therefore marveled at His divine sayings. Jesus doubtless produced from His own divine consciousness all that was true in every religion; but He borrowed from none.

This, however, does not warrant the inference that He received no instruction in childhood. There is the clearest evidence that He was taught the law and the prophets, and that His meditation had been therein day and night. He doubtless learned to read like other children, though His *understanding* of the living oracles was by an inward light. We cannot but imagine that He was the pupil of His Virgin Mother. We shall surely be guilty of no irreverence, if we picture Him as standing by the knees of Mary, while she teaches Him out of the law. What must have been the feelings of that mother, as she looked on that upturned face, in which was the dawning con-

* Renan.

sciousness of His divine parentage; as she watched the daily development of that unearthly purity and wisdom which attracted the attention and reverent admiration of neighbors. How holy, how beautiful, must have been the intercourse of the Virgin Mother and the Divine Child! How serene and saintly must have been the tender period of His infancy; and although but a peasant's cottage, how hallowed must have been His home

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUTH OF JESUS.

JESUS GOES UP TO JERUSALEM—DISAPPEARANCE OF JESUS, AND HIS DISCOVERY IN THE TEMPLE—REPLY OF JESUS TO MARY, AND ITS PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE—LACK OF MATERIALS FOR THE HISTORY OF HIS YOUTH—FILIAL SUBJECTION OF JESUS—HIS LABOR AND CARE FOR THE HOUSEHOLD—HIS OCCUPATION—MARY'S FAITH IN HIS MESSIAHSHIP—HIS PROBABLE ASSOCIATION WITH MEN—HIS COMMUNION WITH GOD.

THE transition from childhood to youth, in the life of Jesus, was marked by a memorable incident. It had been the custom of Joseph and Mary to go up once a year to Jerusalem, to the feast of the Passover. As Jesus had now reached the age of twelve years, which, according to Jewish notions, was the commencement of youth, they determined to take Him with them to the house of God. Thus He who was greater than the temple appeared a second time in its courts. At the close of the feast, the caravan, which seems to have been a large one, set out on the homeward journey. Either soon after starting or during the course of the day, Joseph and Mary appear to have noticed the absence of Jesus from their company. But supposing Him to be with their friends and neighbors in some other part of the caravan, they gave themselves no uneasiness. When, however, the caravan halted for the night, which was probably at only a short distance from the city, and Jesus could not be found, they were filled with solicitude. Hastening back to Jerusalem, they diligently sought Him in every place where they judged it possible He might be found. For three days, long days

they must have been to Mary, their search was fruitless. But at length they found Him in the synagogue of the temple, sitting among venerable doctors of the law, listening to them, asking them questions, and in His turn giving such answers as filled them with astonishment. It would seem that His words were to them flashes of divine light, far above all human learning, far above the wisdom of the schools,—words which proceeded from a consciousness of divine things which no Master in Israel had ever felt. It is possible that several of the most illustrious Rabbis, on this occasion spoke face to face with Him before whom their wisdom afterwards paled its boasted glory. “The now aged Hillel the looser, and Shammai the binder, and the wise sons of Betirah, and Rabban Simeon, Hillel’s son, and Jonathan the paraphrast, the greatest of his pupils,” might have been in that august company.

Mary’s past grief and present surprise are shown in the tender words:—“Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.”* The answer is singularly interesting as the first recorded saying of Jesus:—“How is it (or why is it) that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”† These words, mysterious as they were to those who heard them, struck the key note of His subsequent life in the flesh. They expressed a distinct consciousness that He was the Son of God, come into the world on a spiritual and holy mission, which must be fulfilled. We are reminded of a later saying, when His work was well-nigh done:—“I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished.”‡ That Mary should have kept this saying in her heart is not surprising. What hallowed and precious memories were treasured up in that heart!

* Luke ii. 48.

† Luke ii. 49.

‡ Luke xii. 50.

Of the next eighteen years of our Lord's life, the evangelists have left us no history. That Jesus abode at Nazareth is quite clear. He did not wander to other countries or to other parts of Palestine, in pursuit of knowledge. Neither did He hide Himself in the desert, as so many of His misguided followers have done. But beyond this we know nothing. Not a single incident of this long period,—more than half of all the time He lived in the flesh,—has been preserved. It is not, however, a blank. One or two pregnant hints are dropped, from which we may with certainty infer the general course of His history.

It is expressly recorded, that, during this period, Jesus was subject to His parents. This was, of course, a free and voluntary subjection; and as He was now becoming conscious of His relation to God as His only begotten Son, it must have been intended to exemplify filial piety and obedience. He who was the head of the creation, and the source of all authority, submitted Himself to the will of earthly parents, and with humble alacrity obeyed their commands. Thus He “learned obedience.”

As youth waxed into manhood, He appears to have regarded Himself as by no means released from obligation to the household; but spent many years of His best strength and vigor in patient manual labor for its support. Tradition records that, soon after His return from Jerusalem, Joseph died; and this is not improbable, as no further mention of his name appears in the inspired history. It is, therefore, quite possible, that the entire support of the household, including now several brothers and sisters,* devolved on Jesus. This continued until He was about thirty years of age. For His mother, however, He

* Whether these brothers and sisters of the Lord were the children of Joseph and Mary, or of Alpheus and another Mary, are questions which are quite insoluble. See Andrews' *Life of Christ*, page 104.

made provision even down to the time of His crucifixion ; for one of His latest acts was to commit her to the care of the disciple whom He loved.

As to His occupation, it is quite certain that He followed the trade of Joseph, for His townsmen afterwards called Him the carpenter. There was a tradition, old even in the time of Justin Martyr, who records it, that our Lord "made ploughs, yokes, and other implements pertaining to husbandry." Imagination may well linger around that carpenter's shop at Nazareth, and sometimes look in at the open door. Such hands were never before or since laid on saw and axe and hammer. Such a countenance—so full of meek majesty, of the peace of God and the presentiment of a wondrous mission—was never, elsewhere, seen in a place of labor and traffic. Little did the employers of that artisan know that He was the only begotten Son of God. They paid for His labor and went their way ; and He toiled on, month after month, and even year after year, in serene patience and joy, knowing that His time was not yet come.

While He was thus unrecognized by the multitude, we can not repress the thought, that during all those toilsome years there was one who received Him from day to day, when He returned from His place of toil to His lowly dwelling, with reverent recognition and unspoken sympathy. The blessed Mary never doubts that He will in due time be manifested to Israel. Yet she waits patiently ; no weak maternal love, no unholy ambition tempts her to incite her Divine Son to anticipate the appointed time of His manifestation as the King of the Jews,—the Saviour of His people. "Full of grace," she rests in an abiding faith, and these are, doubtless, the happiest years of her life. Not yet does the sword pierce through her soul.

What discourse Jesus held with men during these years we know not. Though His manner of life was secluded,

we can not believe that He withdrew Himself from the society of friends and neighbors. That would have been contrary to the spirit of His religion. He doubtless mingled in social intercourse with the large circle of relations in the neighborhood ; and with His townsmen, as occasion offered ;* and His bearing towards all must have been lowly, gentle and courteous ; for His whole life was steeped in love. Neither can we doubt that He lived in uninterrupted communion with his Father. The groves and grottoes, the mountains and valleys around Nazareth, were hallowed by His meditations and prayers.

* This is a fair inference from Luke ii. 44.

CHAPTER VII.

LESSONS FROM THE YOUTH OF JESUS.

WHY JESUS MUST NEEDS PASS THROUGH THE PERIOD OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH—NECESSARY TO A PERFECT SYMPATHY WITH MAN—A GROUND OF COMFORT TO PARENTS—BRINGS THE CHILD NEARER TO JESUS—THE DUTY OF FILIAL PIETY—THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS ENNOBLES LABOR—IT DIGNIFIES EVEN POVERTY.

HAVING thus brought down the history of Jesus to His thirtieth year, the period at which He was to enter upon His ministry, we naturally pause to consider the question, Why did He spend so long a time in a secluded and obscure condition before engaging in His great work? Why did He not appear on earth in a mature manhood, like the first Adam, and speedily accomplish His divine mission?

Those who would ask this question have not deeply pondered the great purpose of the Incarnation. Had they done so, they would have seen at the outset, that it was necessary that the Son of God should acquire by actual experience perfect sympathy with men.* He must enter by a true birth into the human family, and must in all things be made like unto His brethren, that He may have a true fellow feeling with them in their infirmities and toils. The thirty years of His life previous to the commencement of His public ministry were necessary to qualify Him, in His human nature, for the headship of His people. But for this He could not have been "touched with a feeling of our infirmities;" and we should not have felt ourselves drawn to Him as a "merciful and faithful High Priest."

** "I entered into the purpose of God and came into the world to sympathize with the weakness of the flesh."*

May we not also believe that, from having been first an infant, and having thence passed, by natural development, to childhood, youth, and manhood, our Lord regards little children with a more tender, sympathizing love? When we consider the weakness of our little ones, and the perils to which they are exposed in this evil world, does it not increase the strength and tenderness of our trust in Him as their Friend and Saviour to know that He passed through the same season of life? When, too, we see them wasting away by disease; when the little limbs grow thin and transparent; when the dear eyes, once so bright, become sunken and dim; and when they pant hard in dying;—is it no consolation to us that we may commit them to One who was once Himself a helpless child?

How necessary, also, was this youthful experience on the part of Jesus to bring Him close to the childish heart! When children are old enough to think and reason somewhat, there is nothing so fitted to win their love and awaken their aspirations for moral purity and goodness, as to tell them of the “Holy Child Jesus.” Many a little dying saint has remembered the Babe of Bethlehem—the Child of Nazareth,—and leaped forward toward eternity with rapturous longing. When we consider how large a proportion of the human family die in infancy and childhood, we feel how necessary it was for their Saviour to gain a true sympathy with them, and to make a conscious union between them and Him possible, by entering, through a true experience, into the facts of their condition. Indeed, we all love to feel that Jesus has trodden the very path we travel; that He knows by experience its dangers and sorrows; that He understands our temptations and has fought our battles. It is this feeling that makes His example so powerfully attractive to persons of every age and condition.

The youthful reader will also see in the early life of

Jesus a beautiful example of filial piety and obedience. He, the Lord of glory, was for thirty years subject to earthly parents. This is recorded as one of the principal features of His character. And who will say that this was not right and lovely? Was it not fitting that the youthful Jesus should treat His own blessed mother with tenderness and respect? Would not His character have lacked symmetry and perfection, if this virtue had been wanting? Surely, it was important that loving and reverent subjection to parents should be *especially* exemplified in the life of Christ, and thus be set before the young of all times, as a model to be admired and copied. Filial piety lies at the foundation of social morality and well-being, and is intimately connected with piety towards God, who is the Infinite Father of all, and who, in that character, challenges the reverence and love of His creatures. "If I be a Father, where is mine honor?"—as if to be a father were to possess the most sacred title to obedience and veneration. The relation between parent and child is indeed holy and tender. Does not the child carry the parent's blood—his very life—in his veins? Is not that transmitted life a mysterious and hallowed bond between them?

Filial disobedience has been branded by all nations and religions as an unnatural, monstrous sin. The youth who can look upon those from whom he drew his life,—those who tenderly watched over his helpless infancy, and provided for his subsistence and culture in childhood, with any feelings but those of gratitude and affection; or who can destroy their peace by cool indifference and wilful disobedience, is an unworthy and dangerous member of society. He will in later years be proud, headstrong, reckless; he will be impatient of all moral restraints; the laws will be but as cobwebs in his pathway of crime; and if he escape the penitentiary and the gallows, it will be

by rare good fortune, or by the special interposition of a long-suffering Providence.

The example of Jesus in His youth, has forever ennobled and sanctified labor. Not only is useful industry in general, but manual labor in particular, made respectable, nay, venerable, by those years of toil at Nazareth. The majority of men must always work with their hands; and our Lord chose their lot, not only to redeem it from contempt, but to teach them how to make it blessed. *Work* will cease to be despised, and will be held in reverent estimation, just in proportion as the history of the Divine Artisan is received into the hearts and reproduced in the lives of the toiling millions. In the same proportion, also, will that contempt of labor, which is the vice of all aristocracy, and of slaveholding in particular, disappear from the world. The true way to emancipate labor, and to abolish slavery in fact as well as in form, is to carry Christ into the lower strata of society, and to leaven the "masses" with His heavenly spirit. Then will they be no longer looked upon as "masses," but in the grandeur of their individual development, as "kings and priests unto God."

It must be also added that the early life of Jesus invests poverty itself with dignity. This was His *chosen* lot in life. He might have made His advent in all the splendor of earthly royalty; He might have surrounded Himself from infancy, with more than the pomp and luxury of Solomon; but He chose rather to be a poor artisan, and to gain His food and raiment by daily toil. This He did to rebuke the avaricious, and to comfort the poor and needy. O ye who are not rich in gold and silver, houses and lands; ye who feel the hard gripe of want,—look not with envy on those who are prospered in the world; but rather look to *Nazareth*, and the meek, toiling carpenter there, and thank God that, even in outward condition, you resemble Him who came in the form of a servant, not to be ministered

unto but to minister. He has sympathy with you in every care and trial, in all your labors and all your privations. What if He should turn from the palaces of the rich and proud to take up His abode with you? This He will surely do, if you feel as He felt and walk as He walked when He was circumstanced as you are. Be diligent, submissive, just, contented, and expect, when Christ shall come again without sin unto salvation, an incorruptible inheritance and a crown of unfading glory.

PART III.

The Preparation.

CHAPTER I.

THE FORERUNNER.

CIRCUMSTANCES AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN BIOGRAPHY—THE “HILL-COUNTRY” OF JUDEA—JUTTAI, AND THE BIRTHPLACE OF JOHN—CHARACTER OF HIS PARENTS, AND DEATH OF HIS FATHER—NAZARITISM—JOHN’S AUSTERITY AS A NAZARITE—ANXIOUS EXPECTATION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE—COMING OF JOHN—EFFECT OF HIS PREACHING—HIS SEVERE DENUNCIATION OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES—MODERATION TOWARDS THE SOLDIERS AND PUBLICANS—PECULIAR FEATURES OF JOHN’S PREACHING—JOHN DISCLAIMS THE MESSIAHSHIP AND DECLARES HIMSELF THE FORERUNNER OF JESUS.

IN order to understand the character of any man, whether obscure or celebrated, we must attentively consider the circumstances which have influenced His development. Among those circumstances, climate, natural scenery, early associations, and manner of life, including even dress and diet, are to be regarded as of considerable importance. The inspired history does not omit such details in its brief biography of John the Baptist, to whose character and mission our attention must now be turned.

According to Luke, who alone has given us the narrative of John’s early life, he had his birthplace in “the hill-country of Judea.” The region so designated in the gospels is an elevated and broken, but not utterly barren tract, lying south of Jerusalem, and west of the Dead Sea. The traveler from Sinai to the Holy City, on leaving the desert, enters a region compared by Dean Stanley to the lowlands of Scotland and Wales. It is marked by high

hills, sheltering green valleys, and is partitioned into gardens, cornfields, vineyards, and olive orchards. Here and there, the ruins of ancient cities attest the strength and glory of its former possessors, while mosques and minarets witness the mournful fact that the followers of the false prophet now hold the soil once trodden by the feet of patriarchs, and still hallowed by their sepulchres.

On the borders of this region, which partakes of the features of both the desert and the hill-country, anciently stood a city of the priests, the ruins of which are still called, by the natives of the country, Juttah. Mention is made of this city in Joshua and Chronicles, in the list of towns allotted to the priests. It is but a few miles from Hebron,—that place so rich in associations, the home and the burial-place of Abraham, the residence of David during the first seven years of his reign, and itself both a priestly city, and a city of refuge. While we can not with absolute certainty identify Juttah with the “city of Judah,” which was the birthplace of John, there are strong probabilities in its favor. We may be sure, at least, that he was born somewhere in its vicinity; for, though his father, Zacharias, was sometimes called to Jerusalem, to officiate in the temple-service, his ordinary residence was in the “hill-country,” and there he and Elizabeth were living at the time of their son’s birth. In this region he must also have grown up to manhood; for he continued in the desert until the time of his showing unto Israel.

Of the parents of John we know little. Their character, however, may be summed up in these words:—“They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”* There is a very ancient tradition that John was left an orphan at an early age, by the barbarous murder of his

* Luke i. 6.

father "between the porch and the altar;"—a crime to which our Saviour alludes, as among the latest and most aggravated of that long series, for which a terrible retribution was about to be visited on that generation.

Previous to his birth, John had been marked out by divine appointment as a prophet of God. By direction of the angel who announced his birth, he was to live a Nazarite. Nazaritism had been common among the Jews, from the days of Moses, and probably from an earlier time. The laws established by him for its regulation required the growth of the hair during the period of the vow, strict abstinence from the fruit of the vine in every form, and the avoidance of all defilement from the dead. There was nothing *monastic* in the nature of this vow, even when taken for life, and it was usually of short duration;—it did not involve celibacy, nor seclusion from the world; nor,—except in the particulars mentioned,—did it require a departure from the customs of society. The life of John was, however, far more solitary and austere than that of Nazarites in general. In addition to the avoiding of wine and strong drink, his food was locusts and wild honey; his raiment was of coarse camel's-hair cloth; and he was girded with a leathern thong. It is probable, also, that from an early age, the consciousness of his prophetic mission cut him off from familiar and cheerful intercourse with the world. As he approached the age of manhood, he must have presented to the few who saw him the aspect of a hermit; perhaps even of a devotee, worn by fasting and suffering.

In his appearance and mode of life, as well as in his character and mission, John revived the type of the ancient prophet, coming in the spirit and power of Elias. Conscious that he was divinely called to be a reformer, that he was to summon a great and corrupt nation to repentance, he early girded himself for his work, not only

by the consecration of all his powers to God, but also by a most rigorous preparatory discipline. He evidently realized, what the general consciousness of the Christian world has never yet ceased to feel, that bodily subjugation, by means of prayer and fasting, is the best possible preparation for eminent service in the kingdom of God. For, in spite of an Epicurean philosophy, it must be maintained, that the mortification of the bodily appetites by abstaining from stimulating meats and drinks, and closer communion with the Holy Spirit, by means of seclusion from the world, meditation and prayer, are among the first and most effective means of growth in grace and spiritual power. There is great reason to fear, that as Protestants, in revolting from the rigor of a solitary and ascetic life, we have swung to the opposite and equally dangerous extreme of self-indulgence and luxury. It can hardly be doubted that John, by his stern, self-denying discipline, laid the foundation for that spiritual purity and power which subsequently enabled him, as a preacher of repentance, to sway the Jewish nation at will. In the course of this preparatory training, he waited in patience and faith, the divine summons to enter on his ministry as the forerunner of Christ of whose birth and presence somewhere among the thousands of Israel, he doubtless had already received full assurance, either from his parents or by direct divine intimation.

In the meantime, the whole Jewish people were in an attitude of waiting. Undoubtedly, vague rumors of the miraculous events which marked the birth of Jesus, had found their way to every fireside in Palestine; and though the wondrous child had disappeared from Bethlehem in a sudden and mysterious manner, and had not since been heard of by those who worshiped at his cradle, yet multitudes who waited for the consolation of Israel, clung to the hope that he would in due time be manifested. This

longing for the speedy advent of the Messiah was becoming daily more anxious and intense as the Roman tyranny grew more cruel and intolerable. It pervaded all classes in every part of the kingdom. The coming of the Messiah was the great theme among the priests who trod the marble cloisters of the temple; among tradesmen, in the market place; husbandmen, vine-dressers, and shepherds, in the fields; fishermen, in their boats; soldiers, in their barracks, and even publicans sitting at the receipt of custom. When women, with their water-pots, met at wells and fountains, they spoke to each other of the Messiah. Mothers and daughters talked together in their chambers of their long-expected King, and listening children, with earnest eyes, looked up to them, and asked: "When is He coming?" Israelites "indeed, in whom was no guile," kneeling under fig-trees and in olive-groves, prayed, "Thy Kingdom come." Aged saints, with bowed and tottering forms, and beards as white as snow, prayed that their dim eyes, ere they were closed in death, might see the Hope of Israel. Thus earnest and expectant was the entire nation. The great crisis was universally felt to be at hand.

Hark! "The voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."* The hour has struck; the word of the Lord comes to John the son of Zacharias; his prophetic burden is laid upon him. Among the mountains of Judah his awful voice resounds like a clarion: "Repent,

* Luke iii. 4.

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* He passes on from village to village, from city to city, and his message everywhere is the same. All men are startled—electrified; they rush forth to gaze upon the preacher; they see his credentials written on his brow; they recognize the light of inspiration in his eye; they feel that the voice which thrills and subdues them is the voice of a prophet. Awe-struck, weeping multitudes gather around him. They follow him from place to place; they hang upon his lips; they watch every gesture. Nor is the extent of the movement less astonishing than its power. As he descends the mountains and approaches the Jordan, he seems surrounded by half the nation; for the news that a great prophet has suddenly appeared, flies like lightning over the land. The valley of the Jordan is one wild scene of excitement. Its dense population is flowing to the spot where the Baptist has taken up his temporary abode. The intelligence reaches Jerusalem, and the vast city is moved by it as the leaves of a mighty forest are moved by the wind. The universal exclamation is: “The time is at hand: our anointed King, the Son of David is about to come!” Crowds press outward from the gates; the road to the Jordan is thronged; all classes are mingled and whirled along together. Not many days elapse before companies arrive from Galilee,—fishermen from the shores of Genesareth; husbandmen and artisans from Nazareth and Cana: and, following close upon these, pilgrims from the remotest confines of the Holy Land,—all rushing to see the new prophet and to receive his baptism; for there “went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”†

In meeting and dealing with this mixed multitude, the

* Matthew iii. 2.

† Matthew i. 5, 6.

Baptist is singularly penetrating and fearless. He distinguishes between true and false penitents. His denunciations of the self-righteous and hypocritical are appalling. Behold approaching him a group of Pharisees, with their broad phylacteries, their sanctimonious faces, and their ostentatious scorn of the profane multitude around them. Hard upon their heels we see another group who, but for their Jewish costume, might be taken for Greek Epicureans, apparently rich, elegant, worldly voluptuaries, without a particle of religious faith or emotion. The Baptist, with his solemn eyes and prophetic insight, reads them all at a glance. His face assumes an expression of awful anger; he breaks forth in words of terrible denunciation: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree; and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."*

With other classes, seemingly more corrupt and culpable, he is more lenient. As the Pharisees and Sadducees slink away from the spot, behold a company of soldiers approaching. They are, doubtless, in the service of Herod the tetrarch, who is himself the mere creature of Roman despotism. We cannot doubt, therefore, that they were held in abhorrence by every orthodox Jew. These are followed by a group of *publicans*—Roman tax-gatherers—men who were more heavily laden with the hatred and execrations of the people than any other class. Surely the prophet will receive *them* with an air of stern reproof and righteous indignation? Just the reverse. His coun-

* Luke, iii. 4-9.

tenance softens; he becomes gentle and affectionate in manner; he kindly imparts counsel to both classes, adapted to their occupations. He says to the former, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages,"* and to the latter, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you."†

A single glance is now sufficient to reveal the strong points in the preaching of John. Its power lay in moral directness and pungency. His baptism had a deeper significance than any *ceremonial* purification. John demanded of his penitents, not only confession of sin, but actual amendment of life. What he most hated and denounced, was ceremonial self-righteousness on the one hand, and, on the other, irreligious worldliness. A peculiar effect of John's appearance and preaching soon began to show itself. "As the people were in expectation," daily looking for the coming of the Messiah, the question arose in many minds whether John might not himself be the expected One;—"All men mused in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not." This led the Baptist to define his position. He disclaims being the Messiah and points the people to One mightier than himself. "I indeed," said he, "baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable."‡

* Luke iii. 14.

† Luke iii. 13.

‡ Luke iii. 16, 17.

CHAPTER II.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

PREPARATION COMPLETE—JESUS AS YET UNKNOWN TO JOHN—JOHN'S ANXIOUS EXPECTATION—BAPTISM OF JESUS—NO NEW COMMISSION TO JOHN—JESUS WITHDRAWS, AND JOHN CONTINUES HIS LABORS—DESIGN OF THE BAPTISM OF JESUS—IT ENFORCES THE GENERAL DUTY OF OBEDIENCE—IT WAS HIS INAUGURATION INTO THE PRIESTLY OFFICE—IT WAS A SYMBOL OF HIS WHOLE WORK IN REGENERATION—ENFORCED BY ANALOGIES.

THE “voice crying in the wilderness” has now sounded from the southern desert to Mount Lebanon. The whole nation has been roused by it to repentance, and is looking for the speedy coming of its divine king. We may be sure that the news did not fail to reach Nazareth, soon after John's appearance; but for months there is no change in the household of Mary. The work goes on in that carpenter's shop day after day, week after week, while the whole nation is in one blaze of excitement. But, at length the time is accomplished; the period of preparation and of waiting has expired; and Jesus being about thirty years of age, lays aside the implements of His trade, and leaves His workshop to others. His hand shall never be laid on axe or hammer again. He leaves Nazareth and takes His journey to the Jordan.

If Jesus and John had ever met,—as from the intimacy between Mary and her aged cousin Elizabeth, and the custom, doubtless observed in both families, of attending the passover feast at Jerusalem, may seem probable,—it could have been only in early youth. John had lived for years

in the solitude of the desert; Jesus "the carpenter's son," could scarcely have been identified out of his own family, with the wondrous Babe, whose birth in Bethlehem and presentation in the temple were still remembered by a few aged saints in Jerusalem. We have the testimony of John, that at the time of the baptism, Jesus was personally unknown to him. This was doubtless by divine appointment, that there might be no suspicion of collusion between them.

We may imagine that, during the months in which John had been preaching, he had looked among the thousands who came to his baptism for the ONE whose shoe-latchet he felt himself unworthy to unloose. Perhaps his heart had sometimes grown sick with hope deferred. He knew the Messiah to be living somewhere in Israel; he knew that He would come to his baptism; and a supernatural sign had been promised him by which he should be able to identify the Saviour of the world. But He had not yet come. The Baptist longs, and prays, and continues to preach the Kingdom of God as at hand.

At length his hopes are suddenly fulfilled. There comes a youth to the Jordan in whom John discerns so much purity, meekness and wisdom, so much gentle and gracious majesty, that, though he does not *at once* recognize Him as the Messiah, he is struck with awe, and overwhelmed with such a sense of impurity while standing in His presence, that he exclaims, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" "Suffer it to be so now;" the Divine Stranger replies, "for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."* The Baptist,—doubtless with a joyful presentiment,—yields: the greatest of the prophets administers this most sublime and significant rite to the one perfect Man. What must have

* Matthew iii. 14, 15.

been his emotions, as descending with Jesus into the Jordan, he baptized Him in the limpid flood! As Jesus went up out of the water, He prayed; and the heavens were opened,* and John saw the embodied form of the descending Spirit,—the appointed sign of the dove—hovering over the head of the august suppliant, and resting upon Him, and he heard at the same moment a voice from heaven saying: “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”†

It would be interesting to know what were at this time the expectations of John, with regard to his future ministry. Doubtless the question arose in his mind, whether his work as the forerunner was not now ended. Was he not about to receive a call as a disciple, and to be henceforth associated with Jesus, in the work of setting up His kingdom? Would he not be, at once, His first friend and chief apostle? Such an expectation would have been extremely natural. But, no! Hardly had the Baptist time to collect his thoughts, ere Jesus disappeared. No opportunity for conversation seems to have been allowed. There was no consultation with regard to their future labors. No new commission is given to John. Jesus now goes up into the wilderness, to fight His great duel with the tempter; John continues his labors. Having received his ministry from God, he will not lay it down without a signal from heaven. Doubtless, he now prosecutes his work with increased hope and joy; for his eyes have seen the salvation of God. But he must sometimes wonder what has become of the meek and lowly Nazarene, whose Divine Sonship was so wondrously attested by a voice from the excellent glory.

The baptism of Jesus, though narrated in few words, is full of meaning. Its general design is intimated in

* Luke iii. 21.

† Luke iii. 22.

His reply to John: "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." The whole of our Lord's life was a continual setting forth of the duty of universal obedience to the declared will of God. "When He cometh into the world He saith, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God."* He strictly kept the law of Moses. He submitted to all rightful authority in the household, in the state, and in the church. He came to John to be baptized, because John was a minister of Jehovah, and because His baptism was a divinely appointed rite. In this, as in all things, he manifested that spirit of obedience which made His life and death a precious and acceptable sacrifice to God. In all parts and periods of His earthly existence,—in childhood, in youth, and in ripeness of years;—as a member of a family, or as a single worshiper; in solitude, or in company; in the wilderness, or in the city; in the shop or the temple; in honor or contempt; in hunger or at feasts,—He could truly say: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."†

Further, the baptism of Jesus was a solemn consecration to His office as the Messiah. That it was such is indicated by the fact, that He did not present Himself to John until he was about thirty years of age,—the age at which the priests were consecrated, and before attaining which, none could lawfully officiate; and that this was the beginning of his public ministry, previous to which He did not, so far as we know, preach a sermon, work a miracle, or make a disciple. As the Messiah, also, it had been foretold by Zechariah, that he should "be a priest upon His throne."‡ He was vested with authority which was kingly. Such authority had been exercised by many of the High Priests, especially from the rise of the

* Heb. x. 57. † Wilberforce on the Incarnation, pp. 178, 180. ‡ Zech. vi. 13.

Maccabees to the accession of Herod. The Jewish High Priest was the only mediator between God and the nation; he only could make atonement for them by sacrifice and intercession,—in all which he was preëminently typical of Christ.* In accordance with this, our Lord actually exercised authority which He derived from His baptism by John. The reader has here only to refer to His purification of the temple, immediately following his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In casting out of the temple those who defiled it with worldly and unlawful traffic, and in justifying the act by an appeal to the Scriptures (“*My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves,*”) He directly assumed authority over the temple and all it contained.

The baptism of Jesus had, moreover, a peculiar symbolical relation to the regeneration of human nature. The baptism of John was a sign of moral purification. Now, as Jesus was without stain of sin, either original or actual, the rite could have no direct personal significance; it could indicate no purification in Jesus; for He had no pollution to be washed away. But Jesus entered, by His incarnation, into the line of Adam’s posterity, that He might regenerate our common *humanity*. He was the beginning of a new creation; the second Adam of a redeemed race. As Adam was the head of the race, in respect to their descent from Him by ordinary generation; so Christ is the head of His people, in respect to their spiritual descent from Him by regeneration. The entire work of redemption may, in this light, be properly called the *regeneration*. This regeneration commenced in the sanctification of Christ’s humanity: “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”† As therefore, the baptism of the

* See Hebrews iv. 14–16, and chap. v. *passim*. † John xvii. 19.

individual believer is a sign of his individual regeneration ; the baptism of Jesus is a sign of the regeneration of the race. In His case, it was not so much the individual that was baptized as *humanity* itself. It was not any sin of His own which was sacramentally washed away by His baptism, but the sins of all His people, which he had taken upon Himself. His baptism was, then, a striking symbol of His whole work as Redeemer.

Aside from its own consistency, this view is amply sustained by analogy. The great acts of our Lord were all *representative*. He acted solely as a public person—as the Head of the Church. Hence, when He went into the wilderness and was tempted, it was as the second Adam—as the representative of the race. Still further, His death was truly vicarious,—it was a sacrifice for, and instead of, the whole world. So, too, in His death and resurrection, He was the Head and representative of His people:

“In Him we rise ;
In Him we reign,
And empires gain,
Beyond the skies.”

It is clear, then, that the baptism of Jesus was a representative act, and prefigurative of His whole redemptive work.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPTATION—PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

PRELIMINARY POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED—JESUS, NOW CONSCIOUS OF HIS MESSIAHSHIP—JEWISH MISCONCEPTION OF HIS CHARACTER AND MISSION—DEMONIACAL CHARACTER AND ORIGIN OF THEIR FANATICISM—THE EXISTENCE OF A PERSONAL DEVIL MUST BE ASSUMED—THE BELIEF IN A WORLD OF SPIRITUAL EXISTENCES, UNIVERSAL AND VALID—REVELATION BRINGS TO LIGHT THE ORIGIN OF A WORLD OF EVIL SPIRITS—THE GRAND OBJECT OF SATAN; AND HIS SUCCESS IN SEDUCING THE HUMAN RACE—THE OBJECT OF JESUS, TO DESTROY THE DEVIL AND HIS WORKS—IN WHAT SENSE IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR JESUS TO BE TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL—DR. SCHAFF'S VIEW OF THE SUBJECT.

IN order to a right understanding of the temptation, it is necessary that careful attention should be given to certain preliminary points. This will not be considered superfluous by the reader who properly estimates the importance of the events related in the sacred narrative. The temptation of Jesus is a mysterious subject; and, from the nature of the events themselves, as well as from some variations in the several accounts given of them, its discussion is attended with grave difficulties.

We can not doubt that at his baptism, Jesus became fully conscious of his Messiahship, and of the supernatural powers inherent in His person as the *God-man*. He had been pointed out by the Baptist as the Christ; He had been declared to be the Son of God by a voice from heaven; He had been filled with the Holy Ghost. He knew, therefore, that the time had come for Him to enter upon His great work. The great question now

was, how He should manifest Himself as the Messiah. The Jewish mind was filled with false notions of their expected King. While they believed that He would be invested with miraculous power, and show great signs and wonders in attestation of His divine mission, they conceived of Him as a secular prince, who would re-establish the throne of David, and extend his dominion throughout the world. This perverted idea of the Messianic kingdom,—an idea from which even John could not quite extricate himself,—was now the greatest obstacle to the recognition of the King who came in a servant-form, to establish His authority, not by force or worldly arts, but by moral influence. It was certain from the outset that the nation, as such, would reject the meek Nazarene who utterly discarded all secular aims, and declined all secular alliances. Jesus was about to enter into conflict with the worldly spirit which lurked under the religious formalism of the Jewish Church.

That spirit had been the growth of ages; and now, under the Roman despotism, it had reached a pitch of patriotic fanaticism which throbbed with feverish intensity in all hearts. Indeed, the whole people seemed to be under a sort of demoniacal possession, which grew more absolute and frenzied down to the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. This strange language will not strike those with surprise who are familiar with the history of that time. We are forced to ascribe the perverted religious views and the terrible fanaticism of the Jews to the influence of Satan. It was thus he strove to thwart the mission of Christ, the Woman's Seed, who, it had been declared, should bruise the head of the serpent.

And this brings us to a question fundamental in the present discussion,—the existence and personality of an evil intelligence, called in the Scriptures the devil and

Satan. On this hinges our interpretation of the Lord's temptation, and in some degree our view of His person. If there was no tempter, we can account for the conflict through which Jesus undoubtedly passed, in no way which will not give a rude shock to our faith in His absolute sinlessness and divinity.

This is a question which can not be settled by science however "positive," nor by philosophy however transcendental. It is a question of *fact* which can only be solved by an appeal to testimony. But what witness shall we summon to testify concerning persons and events in a sphere quite beyond the cognizance of the senses?

That there is such a sphere, has been believed in all ages; and, whatever modern rationalism may assert to the contrary, is believed as strenuously in our highly civilized nineteenth century as ever. What nation, ancient or modern, has not held to the existence of spiritual intelligences and their influence on man? The beautiful superstition of ancient Greece, which peopled the rivers, fountains, caves, trees, oceans, and heavenly bodies with divinities, was an effort of human nature to explore *that hidden world* which was believed to encompass, pervade, and vivify the world of sense. The whole vast and sombre mythology of oriental nations is a herculean effort in the same direction. The Hindoo pantheon, with the subtle, pantheistic philosophy which is its key, reveals a mighty but fruitless attempt of unassisted reason to clutch the secret of the universe. Go where you will, you shall find men gazing with earnest, longing eyes into the great darkness. Thus nature itself clearly intimates the existence of a spiritual world; but what it is and what are its relations to men, revelation only can disclose.

Revelation lifts the veil. It gives us glimpses of a vast and wonderful theatre, the actors of which are innumerable spiritual creatures, both good and evil. It carries us

back to a period anterior to the creation of our world, and makes us spectators of grand and awful events in the world of spirits. We behold rebellion in heaven. We see an exalted Intelligence in the exercise of free-will revolting against the government of God, and drawing after him an innumerable host of inferior spirits. Thus originated the *Kingdom of Evil*, of which *Satan* is the head and chief. This idea of the person and aims of Satan, is the key to this mysterious portion of sacred history.

Those who deny a personal devil can not understand the temptation. They fall into manifest absurdities when they begin to explain the particular expressions employed by the evangelists. What, according to their view, is meant by the "*devil*?" They answer flippantly enough the "principle of evil." And, pray, what may that high-sounding phrase, "principle of evil," signify? Are we to understand by it, a law, or force, or impersonal energy, which operates like the law of gravitation in the material world? That would be monstrous fatalism. Does it, then, mean natural depravity; an innate tendency to sin? Beware! Will you charge on the Holy one of God moral corruption? Was HE assailed in the solitude of the desert by the solicitations of an evil nature? The question ends the controversy.

It is the purpose of the arch apostate to extend and perpetuate moral evil; to maintain incessant war against truth, order, holiness, and God. In the prosecution of this purpose, Satan, when man was created in the image of God, undertook to lead him into transgression. The first man, according to that great law which governs the transmission of life from generation to generation, held the character and destiny of the race in his own hands. When, therefore, by diabolical arts Adam was seduced to disobedience, sin became hereditary and organic, and the whole race came into the closest union with the fallen

angels; Satan became “the god of this world, and ruled in the hearts of the children of disobedience.” “The whole world,” says John, “lieth in the Wicked One.”* “Ye are of your father, the devil,” said Christ to the Jews, “and the lusts of your father ye will do.”† It was the design of the original temptation in Paradise to bring the human family into this fearful bondage to the powers of darkness. The consequence of the fall was, that men became naturally susceptible to diabolical influence.

Now it is expressly revealed that the mission of Christ was to destroy the works of the devil; and to redeem the human race from this dreadful thralldom. To this end He became incarnate, for thus only could He become the new Head,—the second Adam,—of the race. As such it was necessary that He should be tried; and that He should overcome where the first Adam had been overcome. He must be exposed to all the malice and cunning of the arch-tempter; He must, even at the outset of His career, descend into the arena and do battle with principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places. Satan must come and *find nothing in Him*. Such is the scriptural doctrine of evil spirits, their power over mankind, and their relation to the mission of Christ. It is a doctrine which may be ridiculed by those who acknowledge no test of truth but their own sensations; but it must be assumed as true by all who would understand the life and mission of Jesus Christ.

Passing from this, another question, hardly less important, presents itself: Temptation implies, not only a tempter, but a certain susceptibility to temptation,—call it, if you will, *temptability*,—in the person assailed. Now, we have affirmed the absolute sinlessness of Christ. How then could He be tempted of evil? He was indeed free

* See the Greek; also the preceding context; I. John v. 18. † John viii. 44.

from all taint of moral depravity ; but He took our nature with its *infirmities*, *natural peccability* included. His human will was mutable ; and He had all the appetites, the desires, the susceptibility to pleasure and pain, which are inseparable from human nature. While, then, there is a sense in which, being God-man, it was impossible for Him to sin, it remains true, that, in His human nature, He was necessarily open to assault, not only in the wilderness, but during His whole course, even until He cried on the cross, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. This is not inconsistent with His sinlessness. Adam, previous to the fall, had no corrupt propensities ; yet he was tempted, to his cost and ours. We must be careful, however, to hold the balance of faith steady and even. If, on the one hand, we exalt the Son of God above the possibility of temptation, we lose our consoling faith in His sympathy with His tempted brethren ; and if, on the other, we ascribe to Him the least inclination to evil, we destroy our own confidence in Him as a Divine Redeemer. The subject is placed in a clear light in the following luminous paragraph, from a learned and thoughtful writer :—

"The sinlessness of Christ was at first only the *relative* sinlessness of Adam before the fall ; which implies the necessity of trial and temptation, and peccability, or the possibility of the fall. Had He been endowed with absolute impeccability from the start, He would not have been a true man, nor our model for imitation ; His holiness, instead of being His own self-acquired act and inherent merit, would have been an accidental or outward gift, and His temptation an unreal show. As true man, Christ must have been a free and responsible agent ; freedom implies the power of choice between good and evil, the power to violate, as well as to fulfill, the law of God. But here is the fundamental difference between the first and the second Adam : the first Adam lost his innocence

by the abuse of his freedom, and fell by his own act into the dire necessity of sin; while the second Adam was innocent in the midst of sin, and maintained His innocence against every temptation. Christ's *relative* sinlessness became more and more *absolute* sinlessness by His own moral act, or the right use of His freedom in active and passive obedience to God. In other words, Christ's original *possibility of not sinning* which includes the opposite possibility of sinning, but excludes the actuality of sin, was unfolded into *the impossibility of sinning*, which *can not* sin because it *will not*. This is the highest stage of freedom, where it becomes identical with moral necessity, or absolute and unchangeable self-determination to goodness and holiness."*

*Dr. Schaff's "Person of Christ," pages 51-52

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPTATION.

SCENE OF THE TEMPTATION—IMMEDIATE OCCASION OF JESUS' GOING INTO THE WILDERNESS—THE FIRST TEMPTATION—ITS GENERAL AIM—ITS APPEAL TO THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SPECIAL POWER—JESUS CHALLENGED TO PROVE HIS POWER—SPECIAL ADVANTAGE TAKEN OF HIS EXTREME HUNGER—WHY JESUS MIGHT NOT WORK THE PROPOSED MIRACLE—HIS METHOD OF REPULSING HIS ADVERSARY—SUBSTANCE OF THE ANSWER OF JESUS—THE SECOND TEMPTATION—REAL NATURE OF THE ACT PERFORMED—THE VIEW PRESENTED TO JESUS FROM THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE—FORCE OF THE DEVIL'S SUGGESTION—OUR LORD'S ANSWER—THE THIRD TEMPTATION—NATURE OF THE ACT PERFORMED, AND THE PROSPECT PRESENTED TO JESUS—SATAN'S OFFER—THE TRIUMPHANT REPLY OF JESUS—END OF THE TEMPTATION—PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

WESTWARD of the Jordan, where Jesus was baptized, stretches a "wilderness," gloomy and sterile, to the foot of a mountain which rises almost perpendicularly to a height of some fifteen hundred feet. This mountain, called Quarantania, is full of caverns, many of them artificial, which were once inhabited by a multitude of hermits, drawn to the place by the tradition that there our Lord passed the forty days which preceded his temptation. The tradition can not be traced to the earliest times, but its truth may be accepted as highly probable. The region answers well the requirements of the inspired history. It is a lonely desert, inhabited by wild beasts, and sometimes infested by robbers.

Immediately after His baptism Jesus was constrained by the Spirit of God to go alone into this gloomy desert to engage in fasting, meditation and prayer. We can

not suppose that this was for any ascetic or penitential purpose; for He was absolutely free from sin, and His body did not need chastisement and mortification. Neither can we believe that, soon after his baptism, as some imagine, a horror of great darkness fell upon His sinless soul, and obscured the consciousness of His Divine Sonship. On the contrary, we rather hold that He wandered into the desert, lost, as it were, in divine musings, and in communion with the Father. We may, also, reverently conjecture that, looking forward to His future work, He was forecasting his labors, and settling the plan of His Messianic ministry. Meanwhile, immersed in holy meditation, and sustained by the vivifying energy of the Godhead which dwelt in His person, He continued forty days without thought of bodily nourishment.

At length, aroused from this divine trance, He felt the pain of hunger. It was at this critical moment that the tempter first approached Him, not, it may be presumed, in a visible, bodily form, but by a suggestion which Jesus at once recognized as from a spiritual intelligence. Doubtless, too, He *saw* the adversary, as spirits see each other; for among His supernatural powers, the vision which penetrates the spiritual world was not wanting.* However this may be, the tempter, having, perhaps, heard the Divine Voice at Bethabara, suspects, without positively knowing, that this is the Son of God. Bent on testing His character and power, he approaches, and partly in the way of challenge, partly as intimating doubt, and partly in the tone of kind suggestion, says to Jesus: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."†

How much of diabolical cunning was wrapt up in those words! Satan well knew the power of hunger over man-

* Luke x. 18.

† Luke iv. 3.

kind. He had seen men rob and murder to procure food; he had even seen delicate women, in time of famine, slay and eat their own children. He knew, too, the extremity of the Saviour's suffering. His language was, then, in effect thus: "Thou hast been declared to be the Son of God. Thou art then endowed with supernatural powers, yet art Thou famishing in this desert. Why endure this longer? Exert Thy divine power, and change this stone into bread. Thou canst easily do it; and the occasion justifies and demands it."

The aim of the tempter was to induce Jesus to put His Sonship to the proof by working a miracle, in the desert, to satisfy His hunger. The *force* of the temptation lay, first, in the very consciousness of special power which, as we have seen, had come to our Lord at the time of His baptism;—the consciousness of a power which He had never yet exerted, but for the exertion of which there now seemed to be an urgent occasion. Was He not hungry? Had He not been fasting for forty days? Might He not perish of starvation in that barren solitude? God did not rain manna upon Him, as He had done upon the fathers in the desert; might He not have left Him to provide for Himself by a miracle? Having the power to do this, why, under the circumstances, should He hesitate?

The possession of special power is itself a temptation. "By it," in the words of another, "the virtuous man is removed from ordinary rules; from the safe course which has been marked by the footsteps of countless good men before him, and has to make as it were, a new morality for himself. In different circumstances, few men can long wield extraordinary power without positively committing crimes. But here we see the good man placed in a position entirely strange, deprived of the stay of all precedent or example, gifted with power not only extraordinary, but supernatural and unlimited, and thrown

for his morality entirely upon the instinct of virtue within Him.”*

Add to this the important consideration that Jesus had never yet wrought a miracle, and that He was here and now *challenged* to demonstrate His power to do so, and for what seemed to be a laudable purpose. What would have been the sin of yielding to the suggestion? Why not as well here as elsewhere evince His power for the first time? Still further: the temptation was rendered peculiarly powerful by the hunger which our Lord must have experienced after so protracted a fast. That it was most intense and painful is beyond doubt. The tempter evidently so understood it, and knowing the strength of appetite in the famishing, counted the more certainly upon success.

Now, looking at these considerations, the question arises, Why might not Jesus have yielded to the suggestion of His adversary? Where would have been the sin? The question is legitimate and must be answered. Jesus considered miraculous powers as a trust committed to Him for the kingdom of God alone. They were powers to be employed, not for the gratification of His own appetite or will, not for any personal or selfish end, but only for the good of others, and for the furthering of His Messianic and redemptive work. Had He wrought a miracle at the suggestion of Satan, for a private end, how would He have differed from false prophets and magicians?

Let us now see how He meets and vanquishes the tempter in this his first attack. He enters into no argument; there is, in His mind, no lawless inclination to reason down. His will is in a state of perpetual sacrifice; and He simply cites the revealed will of God, saying: “It is written,” as an answer to the unholy suggestion. Let it be noted that

* Ecce Homo.

His weapon throughout this conflict is the Word of God,—that sword of the Spirit which no defensive armor of hell can withstand.

The passage quoted on this occasion was singularly pertinent and powerful. This appears the more strikingly when it is read in its connection as it stands in Deuteronomy viii. 2, 3: “Thou shalt remember all the way in which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that *man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord* doth man live.” The word of the Lord, His creative word, had provided the manna instead of ordinary food, and it had sustained life as well or better. The same creative word can support human life by any means which it may appoint.

In this quotation Jesus declares His unshaken confidence in His Father’s love and power, and His absolute submission to His will. “Far be it from me,” is the substance of His reply, “to prescribe to God the mode in which He shall provide me sustenance. Rather will I trust His creative power, which can find means to satisfy my hunger even in the desert, though it may not be with man’s usual food. Far be it from me to pervert the miraculous powers which He has given me, to any other than the holy uses for which He designed them. Rather will I wait His time, and trust His wisdom for the fitting moment to prove that ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.’” * Wonderful self-denial! Call it

* Matthew xxviii. 18.

rather divine! "He will not help Himself from resources which he conceives placed in His hands in trust for the good of others. He prefers rather to suffer."* Such was the victory of Jesus over the tempter in his first assault.

The record of the second temptation is as follows: "Then the devil taketh Him up into the Holy City and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him: If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."†

Let us here again exclude the fancy that there was any bodily appearance of the adversary, or that he transported the Saviour through the air, from the desert to Jerusalem. The words of the evangelist imply nothing of the kind. The meaning is, simply, that Satan *conducted* Him into the Holy City; that is to say, by a powerful impulse to which Jesus voluntarily yielded. A few hours' walk would enable Him to reach the city, and to ascend that lofty wing of the temple which overhung the valley of Jehoshaphat. Josephus declares that no man could stand on that pinnacle, without being dizzy; and that its height was so great that a man could not see the bottom of the valley beneath.

That Jesus really stood on that lofty wall, we cannot doubt; otherwise, the temptation has no meaning. We must presume, also, that He stood there in the day-time, and in public view; though, of course, the attention of the multitude passing in the streets and valley below was not particularly drawn to Him. It is probable that the pinnacle on which Jesus stood was much frequented by those who desired to view the Holy City and the region around, resembling in this respect the dome of St. Paul's

* Neander's "Life of Christ," page 71.

† Matthew iv. 5, 6.

in London, or of St. Peter's at Rome. He stands there, as any other stranger might stand. He sees the people below, moving hither and thither like pigmies. He sees the buildings of the temple glittering in the sunlight. The courts are thronged with worshipers. The fire is blazing on the high altar. The priests are passing to and fro in their ministrations.

As Jesus stands here, the tempter again appeals to His consciousness of supernatural power, with the design of seducing Him to exert that power for a purpose incompatible with the end of His mission; and, perhaps, to create a doubt in His mind, by the reiteration of the former challenge. He whispers "Cast Thyself down: no evil can come of it; God has promised that His angels shall bear Thee up in their hands. Test Thy Sonship here and now, in the presence of priests and people. Show by a great sign, that Thou art the Christ. An opportunity is offered Thee, to demonstrate to Thyself and the nation that Thou art the Messiah. Descend on angel's wings, to the valley at the foot of this precipice, or into the courts of the temple; and Thy claims will be at once established. Thou wilt be installed at the head of the nation and of the hierarchy, as their Priest-King. By a single act, Thy work will be accomplished."

Our Lord meets this attack of the tempter with another stroke of that glittering sword, of which Satan had previously felt the edge. It is written again; "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."* This is equivalent to saying, that to work a miracle merely to display supernatural power; especially to cast one's self into danger which might be avoided, merely to test divine faithfulness and love, would be tempting God. Christ's faith in God and in Himself and His purpose not to employ miraculous power

* Matthew iv. 7; Deuteronomy vi. 16.

in an ostentatious, *magical* manner, to gratify the Jewish appetite for marvels, does not once falter. Not by appealing to *superstitious wonder* will He enter on His public work, nor will He do it rashly and prematurely: He will calmly wait for an intimation of the Father's will.

And now comes the third and last encounter. "Again the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto Him: All these things will I give unto Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." * Satan still continues invisible, or is visible only to our Lord's inner eye. He leads Him up into a lofty mountain; and, as He there gazes on the wide prospect, the horizon seems to retreat; distant seas, shores, countries, cities, rise to His view, till the whole world lies before Him as a map. The mighty kingdoms of the East,—Parthia, India, China; the countries of the South,—Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia; the great empire of the West, including Greece, Italy, Gaul, Germany, Spain, Britain,—all are presented to his eye "in a moment of time,"—an expression which plainly intimates the preternatural character of the vision.

All these kingdoms; that is to say, *the empire of the world*, Satan offered to Jesus. The empire thus offered was not only *world-wide*, but of a *worldly nature*,—an empire to be won by satanic agency, and maintained by satanic arts. He solicits the Saviour to set up such a kingdom as the Jews were longing for; and he offered his aid in establishing it. Thus was Jesus brought face to face with the *spirit of the age*,—with its selfishness, its corrupt principles, its unholy arts, its satanic tendencies, its pomp and luxury, its pride and oppression,—in a word, its *devil-worship*; for Satan was right,—such an empire as he

* Matthew iv. 8, 9.

offered could only be won by his aid. Neither can we doubt that he was perfectly sincere in his offer. There was no man whom he would so willingly have made emperor of the world as Jesus of Nazareth; for that would have involved the apostasy of the Messiah, and the destruction of the hopes of mankind. Satan would have been more than ever the "god of this world."

But, blessed be God! our Captain in this conflict proved stronger than the "strong man armed." Listen! "Then said Jesus unto him: Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."* Thus our Lord resisted the temptation to found a secular monarchy, by declaring that God was the only object of worship. The one true God,—holy, just, ever-living,—was proclaimed the sole King and Lord whose will was to be done on earth and in heaven.

Thus ended the temptation. Satan, baffled and confounded, withdrew. A MAN had at length foiled his hellish arts and overcome him in open fight. As he left the Saviour, angels came and ministered unto Him. The words which our great poet has put into their mouth, might have been fitly sung by them:

"Hail, Son of the Most High! Heir of both worlds!
Queller of Satan! on Thy glorious work
Now enter; and begin to save mankind."

The history of this conflict between our Lord and the prince of darkness is highly suggestive. It reveals the fact that there is a kingdom of evil which dominates over our human world. Men have been ensnared, conquered and led captive by Satan. They are continually exposed to the influence of evil spirits; and our corrupt nature

* Matthew iv. 10; Deuteronomy x. 20.

constantly invites and reinforces their assaults. The narrative also suggests their peculiar avenues of approach,—appetite, pride, and love of power. To temptations in these directions we are constantly exposed. It shows, also, that Jesus went to that battle, as the Representative Man, the Elder Brother, and, therefore, the Defender, Champion, and only Hope of the human family.

PART IV.

The Early Ministry of Jesus.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS AT BETHABARA.

GENERAL METHOD TO BE PURSUED—JOHN CONTINUES HIS LABORS—THE SANHEDRIM RESOLVE TO QUESTION HIM—JESUS GOES TO BETHABARA—MESSENGERS OF THE SANHEDRIM QUESTION JOHN—JESUS PRESENT AND RECOGNIZED BY JOHN—JOHN EXPLICITLY ANNOUNCES JESUS AS THE MESSIAH—ANALYSIS OF JOHN'S LANGUAGE—JOHN'S CHARACTER AS THUS EVINCED—JOHN AND HIS DISCIPLES ANDREW AND JOHN—CONFERENCE OF JESUS WITH ANDREW AND JOHN—INTERVIEW OF JESUS WITH SIMON—JESUS MEETS PHILIP—JESUS AND NATHANAEAL—QUIETNESS AND PRIVACY OF JESUS' FIRST LABORS AND THE HUMBLE CHARACTER OF HIS AGENCIES—CHARACTER OF GOD'S MODE OF WORKING—HARMONY OF THE COURSE OF JESUS WITH THE DIVINE METHOD, A PROOF OF HIS DIVINITY.

IN the preceding portions of the work, each chapter has had a certain unity of its own; it has embraced a distinct topic which admitted a certain logical compactness in its treatment. For obvious reasons this will be hereafter impracticable. We enter, now, upon the simple narrative of the life, labors, and death of Jesus. The order pursued must, of course, be mainly chronological, and the method adopted must be chiefly that of a running commentary upon the narrative. The object will be to present Jesus living, acting, teaching, suffering, dying, rising, and ascending to heaven, in such graphic and forcible terms as will impress upon the mind of the reader a clearer, fuller, lovelier, image of the Incarnate Son of God, who dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

It will be remembered that immediately after His baptism, Jesus disappeared, leaving John entirely ignorant

of His plans or movements. The latter, having as yet received no new revelation as to his ministry, continued preaching, and was at the time at which our narrative opens, at Bethabara, on the eastern bank of the Jordan. He appears to have been thus far unmolested. The great council of the Jewish Church, called the Sanhedrim, had permitted him to preach and baptize without interference or even inquiry. Doubtless many of its members shared in the popular enthusiasm, and cherished the hope that the coming of their King and their national emancipation was at hand. When, however, the suspicion began to prevail that John himself was the Messiah, the council determined to inquire into the nature of his mission, and his warrant for baptizing. In pursuance of this purpose, they selected messengers from among the priests and Levites belonging to the sect of the Pharisees, and sent them to Bethabara to question John.

Jesus had, in the meantime, sought the same place, partly because the Baptist was there to render a public testimony to His Messiahship, and partly because there were among the multitude of John's disciples, a few to whom He wished to manifest Himself. He had, therefore, taken temporary lodgings at Bethabara, and was now quietly waiting the proper opportunity to enter upon His work. Whether or not He had any interviews with John, during those few days, we are not informed. That John was aware of His presence among the multitude, is quite evident, although to all others He appears to have been wholly unknown.

Coming at length to Bethabara, the messengers of the Sanhedrim approached John, and accosted him with the question: "Who art thou?"* The question was abrupt, and was probably put with an air of authority. The an-

* John i. 19.

swer was correspondingly curt and explicit: "I am not the Christ."* "What then; art thou Elijah?"† This question evidently referred to the prediction by Malachi, that Elijah would be the forerunner of the Messiah.‡ As he was not Elijah, in their literal and carnal understanding of the prophecy, John replied: "I am not."§ "Art thou, then, that prophet?"—that is, the prophet spoken of by Moses.|| "No!" "Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?"¶ To this question John returned a very general and cautious answer; for he seems to have had no confidence in his interrogators. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Isaiah."** This vague reply by no means satisfied the messengers; for they immediately rejoined: "Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that prophet?"†† This was as if they had said: "No one can baptize without divine authority. If you are neither of these divinely authorized messengers, what are your credentials? what right have you to baptize?" John at once replies: "I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you whom ye know not. He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."‡‡ The purport of this reply was: "My baptism is merely figurative of a mightier, even a *spiritual* baptism, which shall be given by Him who cometh after me; and of whom I testify that He has already come; that He is standing even now among you, though unrecognized by any but myself. He is so pure, so holy, so exalted, that I feel unworthy to perform the lowliest offices about His person,—I am not worthy to unloose even the latchet of His shoe."

* John i. 20.

† John i. 21.

‡ Malachi iv. 5.

§ John i. 21.

|| Deut. xviii. 15.

¶ John i. 22.

** John i. 23; Isaiah xl. 3.

†† John i. 25.

‡‡ John i. 26, 27.

It is evident from these words that Jesus was present at this interview between John and the messengers; and that, though the multitude knew him not, the Baptist knew Him, and inwardly loved and adored Him. He did not point Him out publicly; but he testified to His actual presence, and His divine purity and power. And this testimony, how touching and beautiful was it! How full of humility, of self-renunciation, of love, of faith! It was remembered and afterwards cited to by our Lord Himself, in proof of His divine mission: "There is another that beareth witness of Me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of Me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth."*

The messengers of the Sanhedrim having returned to Jerusalem, John, on the following day, took occasion to bear a still more explicit testimony to the character and mission of Jesus. Seeing Jesus coming to him, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said: After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for He was before me. And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, said unto me: Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."†

These words of John are so full of meaning that they call for particular consideration. His opening exclamation was prompted in part, by the personal appearance of Jesus, and in part by a prophetic insight into His character

* John v. 32, 33.

† John v. 29-34.

and mission. There was stamped upon His features, and expressed in every motion, that calmness, gentleness, lowliness and purity, which, when the Baptist saw Him approaching, naturally led him to exclaim, "Behold the *Lamb of God*." The figure was both apt and striking. His appearance was *lamblike*. But, it was prophetic illumination which led John to add that expressive clause: "which taketh away the sin of the world." "Here," says John, "is the spotless victim whose blood shall expiate human guilt; here is the *true sacrifice*; the *true atonement*." He then announces the dignity of Christ's person. He "is a man who is preferred before *me*; for He was before me,"—language which finds its key only in the divinity of Jesus. John, without doubt, intends to affirm our Lord's preëxistence as a divine person. From the study of the Old Testament prophecies, as well as from immediate inspiration, he had learned that Jesus was not a mere man; that, while He was born of a woman, in *time*, His goings forth were from eternity;—that, while He was the Son of Man, He was also the Son of God; for such he styles Him: "This is the Son of God." "Nor," adds John, "is this a mere natural impression, made on my mind by long and familiar personal acquaintance. I knew Him not, but recognized Him by a sign from heaven, given me when He came to be baptized. I saw the heavens opened and the spirit descending in the shape of a dove and remaining on Him, and I knew then that He was the long expected Messiah." Thus the testimony of John to the Messiahship of Jesus carries all the force and authority of prophetic insight.

We can not do justice to the character of John the Baptist, without noticing the noble, unselfish spirit which he evinces throughout these transactions. Exalted in his prophetic mission, gifted with extraordinary powers, and attended with astonishing popularity, he looks upon the

meek and lowly Jesus with no feeling of rivalry. He humbly defers to His superior worthiness; he joyfully seizes upon every opportunity to proclaim Him as the Messiah,—the King; he readily surrenders to Him his best and dearest disciples. Humble, faithful, mighty prophet, the more we see of him, the more we realize the truth of the Saviour's words: "Among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."* We shall meet him in this history but once or twice more; but we shall find him always the same firm, self-denying, faithful prophet of God, "fulfilling his course" even in prison and in martyrdom.

The next day John standing with two of his disciples, sees Jesus walking, and calls their attention to Him. Let us imagine the scene, and note the characters. There is the Baptist, clad in his coarse garment of camel's hair; his pale face gleaming with an awful inspiration, every feature and every motion expressing intense and solemn earnestness,—his whole aspect and manner marking him as a man dead to all worldly hopes, aims and passions. Near him stood his two disciples,—young men, dressed in the humble garb of fishermen, from the shores of Lake Gennesareth. One of them is Andrew, the son of Jonas, better known as the brother of *Simon*, who was distinguished among his humble associates for his extraordinary energy, vehemence and courage. His companion is a young man of calm and thoughtful countenance, irradiated with the spirit of wisdom, love and devotion. His name is not given; but we are quite sure that this is *John the son of Zebedee*.

And now a fourth person comes into view. John beholds Jesus walking at a little distance, and gazing upon Him with affectionate reverence, exclaims, "Behold the

* Matthew xi. 11.

Lamb of God." The two fishermen, struck both with the words of John and the appearance of Jesus, reverently approach our Lord, and address Him: "Master, where dwellest Thou?"* He kindly replies: "Come and see."† They accompany Him to His temporary abode, and remain with Him till the close of the day; that is to say, about two hours. Our Lord, who has hitherto appeared only as a silent actor, now comes upon the stage as a teacher; He commences His work. What transpired during His interview with these two Galileans, is not recorded. His conference with them, however, determined their after career. From this time they became His disciples, and were subsequently called to be apostles. John, if indeed it was he, was chosen by Jesus as his bosom friend; he became "that disciple whom Jesus loved." And it is interesting to know that he who outlived all the other apostles, was perhaps the first who sustained towards Jesus the relation of disciple.

This interview of Jesus with the two disciples led to important results. Andrew, who seems to have believed with all his heart, yearned to bring his friends to his new Master. He first of all seeks his brother Simon, who is also at Bethabara, and when he has found him, tells him the joyful news: "We have found the Messiah."‡ He has come! He is here at Bethabara! We have seen Him! I was with Him two hours last evening! You must come and see Him; for to see Him is to believe on Him and love Him." Simon is smitten with wonder and curiosity. He accompanies his brother to Jesus, who receives him graciously, saying, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas;"§ that is to say, men shall call thee the *Man of Rock*. This address must have filled Simon with astonishment. How far he

* John i. 38.

† John i. 39.

‡ John i. 41.

§ John i. 42.

was led to believe on Jesus, at this time, is uncertain; but we know that soon afterwards he became His constant follower. For the present, however, he and his brother Andrew return to their boats and their nets.

Having now accomplished His work at Bethabara, our Lord determined to return to Galilee. He had made a beginning, although, to human view, one exceedingly small and unpromising. Of all John's disciples, He had found but three of susceptible and believing minds. Either on His way to Galilee, or after He had reached His destination, He fell in with Philip, who resided in Bethsaida, on the northern shore of the Sea of Tiberias, and who was, in fact, a fellow townsman of Andrew and Peter. Jesus said to him: "Follow me."* The call was effectual. Philip immediately engaged in the work of bringing others to Jesus. Falling in with Nathanael, of the neighboring village of Cana, Philip says to him: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth."† Nathanael, though a good man, is under the influence of local prejudice. "Nazareth!" he exclaims; "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"‡ Philip answers, "Come and see." As they approached our Lord, He looked with kindness and complacency on His new visitor. "Behold," said He, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;"§ that is to say, a Jew inwardly as well as outwardly; in the spirit as well as in the letter. Surprised at this recognition and address, Nathanael asks: "Whence knowest thou me?" Jesus replies: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."|| Struck with sudden conviction that this is indeed the Messiah, Nathanael exclaims: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel."¶ His prejudices against

* John i. 43.

† John i. 45.

‡ John i. 46.

§ John i. 47.

|| John i. 48.

¶ John i. 49.

Nazareth are all dissipated ; Jesus has given him a proof of supernatural knowledge which is beyond all controversy ; and he at once confesses his new-born faith. Jesus, in His reply, admonishes him that he is yet only in the first stage of faith. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, hereafter ye shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."* "Nathanael was to see greater things than this isolated ray of the supernatural. He was to learn Christ as Him through whom human nature was to be glorified ; through whom the locked-up heavens were to be again opened, and the communion between heaven and earth restored ; to whom and from whom all the powers of heaven were to flow."† Nathanael becomes henceforth a disciple, and in due time an apostle, under his surname of Bartholomew.

This portion of our history is in several aspects highly suggestive. We can not but notice the noiseless and unostentatious manner in which Jesus commences His work. He makes no loud proclamation of Himself or His mission ; He does not assail and overwhelm the scribes and Pharisees with the wisdom and eloquence of set discourses ; He does not astonish and captivate the multitude by the splendor of His miracles. On the contrary, He waits patiently at Bethabara, for some quiet opportunity of doing good in private. Almost directly pointed out to His messengers from Jerusalem, He gives no responsive sign, no manifestation of His glory. When approached by the two inquirers to whom John had privately disclosed Him, He withdraws with them into the seclusion of His abode, and brings them to a conviction of His Messiahship, not by signs from heaven, but by personal instruction and

* John i. 50, 51.

† Neander's "Life of Christ," page 165.

persuasion. Indeed, the tribute which He pays to the superiority of private, personal effort for the salvation of souls, over all public ministrations, is most significant. Equally striking, too, is the testimony He bears to the real dignity and worth of the humbler agencies,—those which men are so prone either to overlook or to treat with positive contempt. Not the mighty, not the noble, did He call to be His earliest companions and disciples, but He chose rather “the weak things of the world to confound the wise.” His first followers and co-laborers were taken from the humbler class, perhaps the humblest of all,—*simple fishermen*.

Now, why all this? It would not have been godlike in Him to do otherwise. Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Almighty Son of God in human form, lived and worked according to the laws and perfections of the divinity dwelling within Him. God’s works are never noisy or obtrusive. His almightiness goes forth in creation and providence with silent though irresistible tread. The heavens and the earth are full of His wisdom and power, but their manifestations are seen only by the eye

“That deaf and silent reads the eternal deep,
Haunted forever by the Eternal Mind.”

It is God’s fashion of working, to operate through the simpler and less imposing agencies, and to proceed from small beginnings, through insensible or unnoted stages, to wondrous and sublime results. And as He works thus in creation and providence, so also in redemption.

In perfect harmony with this divine method was the course pursued by Jesus. That He chose such a course, was proof of His oneness with the Father;—of His true divinity. He Himself said on one occasion; “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;” * and when carefully con-

* John v. 17.

sidered, His works appear to have been patterned after the works of God;—to be of a piece with them. He, therefore, who does not see in this feature of Christ's life and labors a proof of divinity, is blind indeed. He who can consider it well, and yet call Jesus an impostor, is little less than a madman. No impostor would have begun the work of converting the human family to a new religion,—of changing the spiritual condition of the world, in such self-abnegating silence and privacy. Nor would he have called to his aid, in this stupendous enterprise, such humble instrumentalities as these uneducated fishermen of Galilee. That Jesus did all this is more wonderful, more God-like than His greatest miracles.

CHAPTER II.

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA OF GALILEE.

JESUS IN PERFECT SYMPATHY WITH HUMANITY—HIS PRESENCE AT THE MARRIAGE AT CANA—HALLOWS THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE—CANA, AND THE UNKNOWN FAMILY CELEBRATING THE WEDDING—THE INVITED GUESTS—MARY AT THE MARRIAGE FEAST—THE WANT OF WINE, AND MARY'S SUGGESTION TO JESUS—THE REPLY OF JESUS—THE MIRACULOUS PRODUCTION OF THE WINE—THE REALITY OF THE MIRACLE—GENERAL UNREASONABLENESS OF SCEPTICISM ON THIS SUBJECT—NECESSITY FOR THE MIRACLE—ITS SYMBOLICAL MEANING.

WHEN the eternal Son of God became, by His incarnation, the Son of Man, it was not His purpose to disturb, much less to abolish, the natural relations and institutions of society, but rather to hallow and glorify them. He came to make the whole life of man on earth pure and blessed and heavenly. Instead of withdrawing Himself from His brethren, as if disgusted by their folly and wickedness, He freely mingled with them, not only in the synagogue and in the temple, but also in the street and in the market-place ; not only at funerals, but in festive assemblies. He manifested, at all times, a genuine sympathy with men in their struggles and trials, their disappointments and failures, their hopes and victories, their social pleasures and domestic joys. We are not surprised, therefore, when we find our Lord in attendance on a marriage feast. The fact, besides revealing the largeness of His sympathy with mankind, has a special significance which is worthy of careful consideration. He well knew

that the time would come when many of His disciples—when many calling themselves His *priests*—would disparage and denounce the marriage state as impure, or at least, less pure than a life of celibacy. Such a perversion of the spirit and precepts of the gospel should have no countenance from His words or His example. His presence at a wedding invests the institution of marriage with peculiar sanctity and honor.

A few miles north of Nazareth, and west of Lake Tiberias, on a rounded eminence, overlooking toward the south a wide and fertile plain, are the ruins of a village still called by the natives, “Cana of Galilee.” In that village resided, in the time of our Lord, a family which was on terms of intimacy with that of Mary. Little is known of it; even the name of the family is not given. That they were in humble circumstances, is quite clear from the fact that artisans and fishermen were among the invited guests, and also from the scarcity of provisions for the feast. In this humble family, an event of no ordinary interest was about to occur. One of its members, whose name is not given, was to bring home a bride. The occasion was one of great rejoicing. From far and wide, they had called together their acquaintance and kinsfolk to share with them in the festivities of the day. Among the invited guests were Jesus and Mary, with the little group of His disciples.

The presence of Mary is a matter of peculiar interest. For more than thirty years, the recollection of wondrous visions, of angelic salutations, of prophetic promises, and above all of that marvellous event which had made her blessed among women,—all these had kept alive in her heart one great divine hope. She had doubtless longed, perhaps with some impatience,—for the manifestation of her Son as the Messiah. She was now evidently expecting some speedy demonstration of His divinity,—some

miraculous revelation of His glory. To this expectation she had been led by many signs and wonders, and perhaps by some intimation given by Jesus himself. A special presentiment seems to have pointed her to this marriage feast as the chosen time.

The guests are all assembled. According to the custom of the Jews, as well as of the Greeks and Romans, one of the number is chosen to preside as "Governor of the Feast;" a feast spread, not in a palace, but in a cottage; not with costly luxuries, but with such cheap yet delicious viands as supply the tables of those who live in the land of the fig, the olive and the vine. The guests gather around the board, and doubtless indulge in such cheerful conversation and innocent hilarity as are appropriate to the occasion. Jesus is among them. The evangelist says nothing of His appearance; but we may imagine Him sitting there, calm, gentle, holy, uttering words of sweetest wisdom, as the tone of the conversation or the incidents of the feast permit.

After the feasting had gone on for some time, the wine upon the table was exhausted, and there was a call for more. The call was embarrassing to the host and his family; either from their poverty, or because the number of the guests was greater than had been expected, they had provided an insufficient quantity. At this juncture, Mary, who was at home in the family, and who had learned the cause of the embarrassment, went to Jesus, as she had doubtless been wont to do whenever she wanted counsel, and said to Him, as it would seem aside from the hearing of the company: "They have no wine." There was more in this than the words seemed to express. Our Lord evidently understood her as suggesting the proper course for Him to pursue,—as hinting the propriety of His providing a miraculous supply.

As this was the beginning of His miracles, Jesus seized

upon the occasion to impress on the minds of those nearest Him a leading principle of His ministry. He apprised His mother that He must not perform these mighty works at *her* suggestion; He must act, not as the Son of Mary, but as the Son of God. "Woman," said He, "what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." As compared with our modern style of address, these words seem abrupt and even harsh. They are, however, though slightly admonitory, perfectly mild and respectful. A similar style was used by Jesus when, as he was expiring upon the cross, He said to His mother: "Woman, behold thy son." Surely, His feeling and intention at that time must have been the farthest possible from displeasure or unkindness. When, then, Jesus says: "What have I to do with thee?" we must understand Him to mean simply: "In matters of this kind, there is nothing common between us; in working miracles, I cannot act under thy advice. Besides, the time for me to interpose has not yet arrived: of that, I must be sole judge." That the words of Jesus were kindly spoken, is evident from the conduct of Mary. Notwithstanding her seeming repulse, she evinces no doubt that her implied request will be granted; this appears from the direction she gave the servants to obey the commands of Jesus.

There were at this time standing in the house, six empty vessels or jars of stone, holding about twenty gallons each. These vessels were used, in accordance with Jewish customs, in religious ablutions. Jesus directed the servants to fill these vessels with water. When they had filled them to the brim, He said to them: "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast."* Having tasted of the wine before distributing to the guests, as was His duty, the governor, being entirely ignorant of what had been

*John ii. 8.

going on, called out to the bridegroom, saying in substance: "Most men bring on their best wine at the beginning of the feast; and, when their guests, having drunk somewhat largely, have either sated their appetites, or become less critical in their taste, they bring forward wines of a poorer sort. But you have reversed the order, and kept the most delicious wine till the last." It thus appears that in obedience to the divine will in Jesus, the water which had been put in the six vessels of stone, had become wine.

Of the reality of the miracle, thus wrought, the facts leave no doubt. There was no room for collusion. The wine had been *exhausted*: the stone vessels had been filled with *water* by the servants: the governor of the feast had borne testimony that when it was drawn again from the vessels, it was *wine*. The miracle was so clear and palpable that His disciples, it is said, "believed on Him." They had *begun* to believe before;—some of them at Bethabara, others in Galilee,—but now their faith was greatly enlarged and strengthened. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory."*

Doubtless, this miracle of the transmutation of water into wine will seem to some minds encumbered with difficulties. The fact is not to be disguised, that there are those who are so thoroughly imbued with the materialism of the age, that they stumble at the miraculous element,—the *supernaturalism*.—of the four gospels. So far as the biography of Jesus comes within the range of ordinary experience, they can read it with delight, for they are deeply impressed with the originality, beauty and power of His personal character; and they admire the singular purity, wisdom, and majesty of His discourses. But, infected with the prejudices of an age which honors a Car-

* John ii. 11.

lyle, a Ralph Waldo Emerson, and a Theodore Parker, they have secret misgivings as to His miracles;—they are disposed to regard them as the inventions of credulity and superstition.

Now, it is not my intention to enter here into any discussion of the nature or probability of miracles. The general subject has been elsewhere sufficiently considered. It is enough to say that the difficulties which appear in the miracle in question all dissolve with the dissolution of the prejudice against miracles in general. Of the nature of the particular miracle in question, it has been forcibly said by that most thoughtful writer, Archbishop Trench: "Like most acts of creation, or more strictly of *becoming*, this of the water becoming wine is withdrawn from sight, and the actual process of the change we labor in vain to conceive. And yet, in truth, it is in no way stranger, save in the rapidity with which it is effected, than that which is every day going forward among us, but to which use and custom have so dulled our eyes that we commonly do not marvel at all, and, because we can call it by its name, suppose we have discovered its secret. He who does, every year, prepare the wine in the grape, causing it to drink up and expand with the moisture of earth and heaven, to take this up into itself, and transmute it into its own nobler juices, did now gather together all those slower processes into the act of a single moment, and accomplish in an instant what He ordinarily accomplishes in many months. This analogy does not, indeed, help us to understand what our Lord did now, but yet brings before us, that in this, He was working in the line of His more ordinary workings—which we see daily around us, the miracle of every day nature."* This train of thought is sufficient to show the unreasonableness

*Trench on Miracles, pp. 90, 91.

of the prejudice against miracles in general, and the objections against this one in particular.

Beyond these more general considerations, this miracle bore a peculiar relation to the mission of Jesus. It was, as the first of His mighty works, necessary to His self-revelation. The evangelist fitly styles it the manifestation of His glory. Jesus appeared in form and fashion as a man. Without such a manifestation of His supernatural power, no one would have believed in His divinity. Only through some such mighty work could the indwelling glory flash forth to human view. This revelation of Himself was therefore necessary to His just reception among men. Without it, His labors would have been followed by no proper discipleship. Only by His miracles, were the minds of men made susceptible of enlightenment by His teachings. They awakened attention, excited reverence and awe, and prepared the way for the exercise of a full and firm faith. As John clearly intimates, because of them His disciples believed on Him. Nor is their influence confined to them. As we look back over the life of Jesus, and find among His works not only miracles, but the very miracles which we should expect to be wrought by a God incarnate,—miracles of blended power, wisdom, and love; we also are constrained to believe that in Him, “we have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.”

As this was the beginning of miracles, it is not unreasonable to look to find in it a prophetic and symbolical meaning. It has, in fact, been regarded by commentators of every age, as intended to shadow forth the great design of Christ's mission. His desire was to change water into wine, in more senses than one. He came, not to destroy, but to fulfil;—to raise nature into virtue, natural pleasure into spiritual blessedness; fallen humanity into the fellowship of God and the hope of glory; to ennoble, beautify,

and enrich the whole of man's life, by infusing into it a new and heaven-born element of love and religion. This *wine of heaven*, into which Jesus transmutes our poor human life, unlike that of earth is not soon exhausted, and leaves no sting behind it, but grows more full and fragrant and precious, as life wears on toward the moment when, having put on immortality, we shall drink the new wine with Him in His father's kingdom.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST JOURNEY OF JESUS TO JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE.

JESUS GOES TO CAPERNAUM—CAPERNAUM AND THE VICINITY—THE VALE OF GENNESARET—THE SOJOURN AT CAPERNAUM—JESUS GOES TO JERUSALEM—JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE—THE MULTITUDE AT THE PASSOVER—CONVERTED GENTILES PRESENT—AGITATION OF THE MULTITUDE—THE MESSIAH IN THE CITY AND THE TEMPLE, BUT UNRECOGNIZED.

AFTER the miracle at Cana, Jesus, accompanied by His mother and His brethren, and by the few disciples who had already clustered round Him, went down to CAPERNAUM, which became the centre of His subsequent labors in Galilee. Capernaum lies on the north-western side of Lake Gennesaret, and is sunk a thousand feet below the level of the elevated plain which surrounds it. The view from the western hills adjacent, is said to be very striking. The traveler sees far below him a blue sheet of fresh water, some thirteen miles long, and in the broadest parts, six or seven miles wide ; its deep depression is a volcanic basin, giving it something of that strange, unnatural character which belongs in a still greater degree to the Dead Sea. The eastern highlands slope abruptly to the water's edge, forming a lofty wall extending the entire length of the lake. On the west, the range of hills starting from the coast, at the southern extremity, trends first westward, and then to the north-east, growing constantly more

rounded and beautiful, till, as a gentle elevation, it again touches the lake.

In the recess formed by these encircling hills, lies the sacred plain or vale of Gennesaret, about seven miles in length by three or four in breadth. It is described by all who have seen it, as a natural paradise. Well watered by perennial fountains and rivulets, with a soil of unsurpassed fertility, and a climate that favors the production of tropical fruits as well as those of the temperate zone, it is even now famous for its exuberant fruitfulness and beauty. In the time of Christ it was thickly studded with flourishing villages, embowered in palm groves, vineyards, and olive orchards. The population,—which contained a large Gentile element,—was numerous and eminently thrifty, subsisting upon the productions of the soil, and the fish of the lake, and enriching itself by commerce with the neighboring towns. Magdala, Dalmanutha, Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, must have constituted an almost continuous city.

Our Lord sojourned but a few days at Capernaum. While there, He seems neither to have wrought miracles, nor to have delivered any public discourses.* He probably spent the time in private intercourse with His disciples, the majority of whom resided in the immediate vicinity. Andrew and Peter, James and John, Philip and Nathanael, must have had the blessed privilege of listening to the early discourses of Him who had been already manifested to them as the “Son of God and the King of Israel.” Perhaps, besides these, a large number of women were already drawn to Him, among whom was Salome, the wife of Zebedee. Thus, there was gathered about our Lord, a company of young men, with their mothers and sisters, who felt in their hearts the dawn of the divine

*See Andrews’ “Life of Christ,” page 156. For the opposite view, see Lange’s “Life of Christ,” volume 2, page 298.

morning which was breaking over the world. It was indeed a fresh and glorious youth which was taking possession of the earth.

The time was at hand when Jesus purposed to make a public demonstration of His divine power and authority. The great feast of the Passover, which was soon to be celebrated, would furnish a fitting occasion. A large part of the nation would then be congregated at Jerusalem. Proposing to manifest Himself to Israel, in that "great congregation," Jesus at length set out on His first memorable journey to Jerusalem. The incidents of the journey are not recorded. Doubtless it was made on foot, in company with His disciples, and probably also with His mother and His brethren. The time was filled up with heavenly discourse, and with the singing of psalms, with which devout Israelites seem to have refreshed themselves, on the way to the Holy City.

As Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, what a spectacle of grandeur and beauty must have burst on His vision. That city was then in its noon-day glory, and ranked among the most splendid in the world. Its population was enormous, and its wealth beyond computation. It was the metropolis, not only of Palestine, but also of the millions of Jews dispersed throughout the whole world, who were continually bringing and sending the richest gifts to the temple. So great indeed had been the influx of gold, previous to the time of Herod, that the priests were at a loss how to dispose of it. They used immense quantities in useless if not puerile ornaments. There was, for example, a large beam of solid gold, enclosed in wood. The great portico was gorgeous with an immense golden vine, heavy with clusters. The treasury was always full to overflowing. Herod employed this incredible wealth in rebuilding the temple and embellishing it with such works of art as the law did not expressly forbid. It was

a marvellous structure. With its stupendous outer wall, its lofty "Gate Beautiful," wrought of Corinthian brass, its pillared cloisters, its outer court, its central edifice, the temple proper, covered with gold, and blazing like an earthly sun,—the whole was the wonder of the world, and the Israelite's peculiar pride and joy. Thither the tribes went up thrice a year to worship. But at the Passover feast, the city,—paved with marble, and built in a style of corresponding magnificence,—was thronged with a "multitude which no man could number." It is computed that this feast drew together, in addition to the permanent population, not less than a million of human beings. Many of these were from remote lands. Arabia, Parthia, Mesopotamia, perhaps India and China; Egypt, Ethiopia, Nubia, Abyssinia; the parts of Libya about Cyrene; Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, Gaul and Spain; every part of the world sent up caravans of pilgrims to the Holy and Beautiful City,—all wearing the costumes and speaking the dialects of the several countries from which they came.

In this vast concourse, were thousands of "devout strangers," not of the seed of Abraham. It is a matter of history, that the Jewish religion had been making rapid progress among Gentile nations, for several generations before Christ. Even kings and queens were among the proselytes who sometimes worshipped in the temple-courts. The glowing prophecies of Isaiah had already been literally, though not finally and completely fulfilled. Perhaps, as our Lord made His way through the throng of strangers, He was reminded of the words of the prophet: "Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together; they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thy heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea

shall be converted unto thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee; the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered unto thee: the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows? Surely, the isles shall wait for thee, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee." These predictions were fulfilled to the letter, at every Passover during our Lord's ministry.

This immense multitude, now crowding the city of Jerusalem, and covering the neighboring hills with their encampments, found the people of Palestine agitated,—almost convulsed, with a great national excitement. For many months a mighty prophet had been preaching and baptizing, saying, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Nay, he had lately, it was said, declared publicly to members of the Sanhedrim, that the Messiah had already come; that He was even then in the land, mingling with the people, though they knew Him not. A vague hope was throbbing in all hearts, that the long-expected Heir of David would soon appear. Might He not appear at this very feast? What more fit occasion for so august an event? These questions, doubtless, passed from one to another. Thus the agitation extended from the Jews to the proselytes and strangers, until the whole vast concourse was tossing with excitement.

The Heir of David was indeed there, though He was unrecognized by the multitude. He had passed through the streets of the city; He had entered the precincts of the temple; He was in the midst of the multitude to

whom His presence was so full of divine promise; but none beheld in Him the "Messenger of the covenant," spoken of by the prophet.* Worldly and unspiritual, how could they discern the Son of God in the meek Galilean youth, upon whom only a few poor fishermen were in waiting?

Malachi iii. 1.

CHAPTER IV.

JESUS PURIFIES THE TEMPLE.

THE TRAFFICKERS IN THE TEMPLE—JESUS DRIVES THEM FROM THE TEMPLE—JESUS CHALLENGED TO SHOW A MIRACULOUS SIGN—REASON FOR HIS REFUSAL TO DO SO—HIS REPLY—SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS LANGUAGE—CONDITION OF THE HUMAN TEMPLE—GOD'S PURPOSE TO RE-EDIFY IT—MEANS REQUISITE, AND SYMBOLS EMPLOYED—CONSEQUENT MEANING OF CHRIST'S LANGUAGE, APPLIED TO HIMSELF—AS APPLIED TO THE CHURCH—FURTHER LABORS OF JESUS AT JERUSALEM.

It would be deeply interesting to know what were the emotions of Jesus, as He thus entered the vast arena called the "Courts of the Temple," and stood amidst the multitude on this august occasion. Of this we know nothing, save that He appears not to have been so much struck with the sight of that sea of human beings, as with the strange spectacle which met His gaze in another part of the sacred enclosure. There were congregated, not reverent Israelites, intent upon the imposing rites of the temple-service; not devout and expectant children of the promise, waiting for the glorious manifestation of their King; but flocks and herds, buyers and sellers, money-brokers and dealers in doves; indeed, all the frequenters and appointments of a regular market. The eager, noisy huckstering went on in sight of the great altar, and of the awful rites of sacrifice. It would seem that the concourse of such a vast multitude, many of them from distant lands, and the consequent demand for victims for the altar, had created a very lucrative trade; and that, for greater con-

venience, the dealers had established themselves in the court of the Gentiles, reasoning, perhaps, that animals intended for sacrifice were less impure and offensive to Jehovah than the uncircumcised heathen. And for this reason, perhaps, the Pharisees, from whose superstitious reverence for the temple some opposition to the desecration might have been anticipated, either connived at it or openly approved it. Possibly, they regarded the Gentiles as standing on a level with unclean beasts, while the sacrificial animals served for purification. It was, therefore, quite in accordance with the spirit of Pharisaism, that those animals were allowed to exclude the Gentiles from their court.*

This open and shameless profanation of the house of the living God, kindles in the soul of Jesus divine indignation. He is in His Father's house; He is rightful Lord and Master here; and He will give a demonstration of His authority. While the merchants and money-changers pursue their sacrilegious occupations, they are suddenly startled by the approach of a youthful stranger, on whose form and features are stamped superhuman power, majesty and holiness. He holds in His right hand a scourge, with which like a prophet of old, He seems to threaten them with divine judgments. They are smitten with supernatural terror. They have no thought of resisting; but as our Lord advances they fall back; they fly from the holy place, expelled by a PRESENCE which cowers and paralyzes their guilty souls. The sheep and oxen are driven out of the temple, and the tables of the money-changers are overthrown. The sellers of doves, treated with less severity, perhaps, because doves were the offerings of the poor,—are sternly bidden to depart. "Take these things hence," says this Divine Lord

* Lange's "Life of Christ," volume 2, page 299.

of the temple ; “ make not My Father’s house a house of merchandise.”

Upon these unwonted proceedings the multitude look with silent amazement : Pharisees and Sadducees are awestruck and speechless ; priests and scribes are dumb : the officers of the temple are powerless to interfere. They recognize in every Jew the right to come forward as a zealot against illegal abuses ; and these acts of Jesus are therefore unforbidden. Only when all is over, a few gather courage to approach our Lord. “ What sign,” say they, “ showest thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things ? ” * The question is natural, though the motive that prompted it may have been criminal. They see in Jesus the assumption of extraordinary authority. He evidently claims to be Lord of the temple. They seek to test His claims. Thus He is challenged in the temple itself, in the midst of the congregated nation, in the presence of the theocratic authorities, to give a miraculous demonstration of His Divine Mission. But He gives no such demonstration. The opportunity, seemingly the fittest of all,—the very one apparently sought by Him,—passes and He gives no sign.

The reason for this is not far to seek. Had He wrought such a miracle as they demanded,—had He given them a sign from heaven, they would probably have accepted Him as their Messiah, proclaimed Him king on the spot, and demanded that He should instantly lead them against their Roman oppressors. Nor would it have availed for Him to protest against such violent measures, and to propose the spiritual objects and plans of the gospel. They could not understand His person or mission ; they would have persisted in regarding Him as a Jewish prince and conqueror. Thus the temptation of the wilderness was

* John ii. 18.

repeated; thus a worldly kingdom was a second time offered and refused.

Yet our Lord does give them a sign, though one which must have seemed to them unmeaning, evasive and even blasphemous: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."* This is undoubtedly one of the most pregnant and wonderful utterances that ever dropped from the lips of Christ. Yet it was obscure, not to say enigmatical, to the most enlightened of those who heard it. The Jews having no conception of His meaning, said: "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days?"† The disciples themselves did not understand the saying till after the resurrection. They did not, however, forget it. Neither did His enemies; for a distorted and malicious report of it constituted one of the accusations against Him, when He was arraigned before the Sanhedrim. The saying evidently made a deep impression on the popular mind; for the thieves who were crucified with Him, and the people who passed by, taunted Him, saying—"Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself."‡

The meaning of this mysterious saying has been growing clearer with the lapse of ages; and we are now enabled to see that it was the far-reaching and comprehensive utterance of One, who was at once the Son of man and the Son of God. Let us endeavor to seize its true meaning.

It is not the concourse of multitudes even for the purpose of worship, which gives to any place or structure the character of a temple; it is the immediate presence of God. Previous to the fall, the true temple of God was man, whose body was a consecrated outer court, whose soul was the sanctuary, with the ever-burning lamps, and the altar of incense, whose spirit was the holy of holies,

* John ii. 19.

† John ii. 20

‡ Mark xv. 29, 30.

illuminated with the indwelling shekinah. But, by the apostasy of our first parents, God was ejected from His chosen habitation, and man was left a mournful moral ruin. What was once the bright and serene dwelling of the Most High, became "the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."* The human world was forsaken of God; and even the natural creation was dimmed by reason of man's rebellion, and of the divine displeasure.

But God yearned after His temple, desolate and in ruins; He looked with pity on His rebellious creature, ever wandering further and further from light and blessedness; He determined to reclaim, purify, rebuild and adorn His lost habitation, and to return and dwell therein forever. That this might be, He would Himself come down into lapsed humanity, by the incarnation of His substantial Word; and would thus, by becoming man, make man His temple.

Many ages elapsed before the accomplishment of this gracious purpose. The human race had sunk so low in moral depravity that "their foolish heart was darkened;" they could not understand nor recognize the presence of God among them, till they had been carried through a long course of special training. It was necessary that men should be brought to think of God as dwelling personally on earth. That was the purport of the whole ceremonial institute of Moses. The design of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple, was typical and prophetic. It implied that God no longer dwelt in the hearts of men; that they could not approach His throne or look upon His face and live; and that no access could be had to His presence except in some way opened by His sovereign good pleasure. At the end of the temple, beyond the awful veil, according to the conception of the Jew,

* Revelations xviii. 2

dwelt JEHOVAH in darkness and solitude. None might approach Him there except the consecrated High Priest, and he only at long intervals. And all this was a type of good things to come. That temple was a shadowy prophecy of the incarnation of God. It was a definite type of the body of Christ. That was its real and exclusive significance. The temple was, from the first, intended to represent and foreshow the personal incarnation of the eternal Son in Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus then the meaning of our Lord's words—"Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days," becomes apparent. The words evidently bear a two-fold meaning—a meaning within a meaning. The Jews had challenged Jesus to give them a sign: He meets their challenge with another, "Destroy YE this temple and I will raise it up in three days. That is to say, I have absolute power over the temple; level it with the dust, and I will rebuild it in three days." They understood it as a profane boast; but it was a saying which enveloped in the literal sense a wondrous inner meaning. The Jews did not accept His challenge; they did not destroy their temple, which was but a shadow of the true; but the latter—the temple of the Lord's body, they did break down and destroy, when they crucified Him. And He kept His word—He gave the promised sign, when He rose from the dead.

The risen and glorified body of Christ became the living corner-stone of the mighty spiritual temple, the church, thence called "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." The words of Jesus apply, in their widest scope, to this also. The temple of Jerusalem stood for the Old Covenant theocracy. *Destroy ye this temple, this economy*—this church of the Old Covenant, *and I will restore it under a new and more glorious form, in three days.* The Jews did, in fact, destroy the temple, in that sense;—that is to say, they put an end to the theocracy—

when they crucified the Lord; but He rebuilt it in His resurrection; for the church of the New Covenant,—which was the theocracy transfigured,—began to exist when its living Head came forth from the sepulchre.

. Though our Lord refused to show a sign in the temple, He wrought many miracles in Jerusalem during the feast; and many, convinced of His divine authority, became His disciples. Wherever He went, He was a living fountain of healing virtue; and “the Life was the light of men.” Disease and spiritual darkness retreated from the sphere of His personal presence.

CHAPTER V.

JESUS AND NICODEMUS.

GENERAL ATTENTION DIRECTED TO JESUS—ANTIPATHY OF THE LEADING CLASSES—EARNEST INTEREST OF THE JEW—NICODEMUS—HIS TIMIDITY AND DISTANCE WITH REGARD TO JESUS—HIS INWARD DESIRE FOR A CONFERENCE WITH HIM—HIS FEELINGS AS HE GOES TO MEET JESUS—HIS OPENING ADDRESS AND THE REPLY OF JESUS—SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR LORD'S REPLY—PERPLEXITY OF NICODEMUS AS TO ITS MEANING—HIS CAVILING REJOINDER—ANSWER OF JESUS—ITS FORCE AS REGARDS REGENERATION—ITS SIGNIFICANCE WITH REGARD TO BAPTISM—SPECIAL OBJECT OF JESUS IN INSISTING ON BAPTISM, IN THE CASE OF NICODEMUS—OUR LORD'S FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE SPIRITUAL BIRTH—INCREDULITY OF NICODEMUS—OUR LORD REBUKES HIS IGNORANCE AND SCEPTICISM—CLOSE OF THE CONFERENCE.

THE events narrated in the last chapter undoubtedly caused a great excitement at Jerusalem. The purification of the temple, in the midst of the great Passover festival, singularly bold and public as it was,—was peculiarly fitted to draw the attention of the nation and of the world to Jesus. The miracles that followed, some of which were probably wrought in public, were doubtless noised abroad, and thus added to the excitement. Hence, before the close of the Passover week, the new prophet from Galilee became the object of general curiosity. There is reason to believe that some had come to feel a deep and solemn interest in Him. The chief men among the Jews, however,—the scribes and Pharisees, priests and rulers,—began to look upon Him with a suspicion already passing into settled hostility. Although He had not publicly assailed them, they felt that He was not of them; and we

know that sects and hierarchies are both jealous and intolerant of those who dare to think and act with conscientious independence. Nevertheless, they did not as yet openly oppose Him, partly because He was, to all appearance, a strict observer of the law, and partly because the belief was rapidly gaining ground among the common people, that He was a true prophet. What they did, therefore, was to keep aloof from Him, and give Him no countenance.

There were, however, some devout and candid persons of the highest rank, who felt attracted to Christ. They were waiting for the kingdom of God; and, though their conception of that kingdom was low and carnal, they hailed with joy every sign of its approach. The preaching of John the Baptist had been to them a welcome signal of the Messiah's coming; and now, the sudden appearance of this new prophet, working mighty miracles, was a manifestation of God's purpose speedily to visit his people. Yet, for the most part, they cherished these hopes and aspirations in their own hearts, being afraid as yet, to commit themselves to what might prove a delusion. Besides this they stood in fear of their colleagues and fellow sectaries, many of whom were decided in their hostility to Jesus.

Such a man was the Pharisee, Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrim, and a teacher of Israel,* standing therefore in the highest rank. He was wealthy and honorable, and revered for his sanctity and wisdom.† Though we

* Nicodemus has by some been identified with a certain Nicodemus Ben Gorion of the Talmud, who was a member of the Sanhedrim at this time. See Smith's Bible Dictionary, *in loco*.

† Nicodemus is called by Jesus, "the teacher of Israel," which may be, according to Erasmus, Winer, and Lange, a rhetorical use of the definite article. Scholl, however, identifies him with the "Wise Man" who sat at the left hand of the President in the Sanhedrim. See Lange's "Life of Christ," volume 2, pages 313, 314, note.

have no notices of his previous life, we shall do him no injustice if we ascribe to him the opinions, prejudices, and modes of thought, inseparable from his sect and position. He doubtless prided himself on his descent from Abraham, and on the dignities and privileges to which that descent entitled him. He was looking for a Messiah who should re-establish in outward glory the fallen theocracy; and that Messiah he believed to be *at hand*. His worldly view was, doubtless, somewhat modified and elevated by spiritual longings for a kingdom of righteousness and peace. In Jesus, Nicodemus recognized, if not the Messiah, at least a true prophet. But he was deeply entangled in the perverted Messianic notions of his generation. He was, moreover, a timid man; and to approach the youthful rabbi of Nazareth in public, would not only compromise his reputation as a teacher, but would draw upon him the suspicion, perhaps the active hostility of his associates of the Sanhedrim, and of the bigoted sect to which he belonged. He, consequently, avoided any direct approach to the young Galilean stranger, and only heard Him in public as one of the excited multitude that witnessed His miracles and listened to His wonderful sayings.

And yet this was not enough. With all his misgiving as to the mission of Jesus, and his fear of losing caste, this learned scribe, this "Master in Israel," was unable to remain thus at a distance as a mere speculative observer. He was profoundly interested and moved, and longed for an opportunity to open his heart to Jesus, and to receive from His lips more full and definite instruction. And Jesus, who was always tender of the very infirmities of earnest and candid inquirers, and who had divined his feelings and wishes, gave him the desired opportunity.

And, so Nicodemus, probably by appointment, came to Jesus *by night*. The visitor, as he passed through the deserted streets, must have felt himself agitated with

strange and conflicting emotions. Perhaps some such train of thought as the following swept through his troubled mind:—"I hope this night to learn something about that glorious kingdom of which David, Isaiah, Daniel, Haggai, and Zechariah prophesied. Long has the chosen nation been oppressed and down-trodden; long has the Holy City been insulted and desecrated by the presence and tyranny of the haughty Roman; long has the prayer been going up from innumerable longing hearts "thy kingdom come;" just now, John the baptizer proclaims that the Messiah is at hand; nay, that He is already come. O that He would manifest Himself to Israel! O that He would ascend the throne of David, expel the godless oppressors of the holy seed, and reign in righteousness and glory on Mount Zion! O Lord, how long? When, when will He appear? I have waited and longed till my heart is sick and weary. Perhaps this youthful Galilean, who is certainly a prophet and teacher sent from God, will give rest and satisfaction to my agitated soul. What if He Himself is our long expected King? There is in Him an unearthly majesty, a divine repose and authority which one would expect to see in the Messiah. Yet, how can it be?—Messiah comes from *Bethlehem*, and this man is from *Nazareth*." Thus meditating, as is probable, Nicodemus reaches the place where Jesus awaits his coming.

The conversation is opened by the visitor. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with Him."* It must be confessed that there is somewhat too much of patronizing courtesy in this address. Nicodemus is rather too conscious of his importance as a ruler and teacher, and of the dignity of the class to which he belongs. He seems to speak for that class, and to assure

* John iii. 2.

Jesus of their favorable disposition towards Him. Yet he was not insincere; and what he said was his apology for coming. He really believed in Jesus as a divinely authorized teacher; and his acknowledgment was intended to prepare the way for certain questions which he was longing to ask. His heart was full of *the kingdom of God*; but he deemed it indecorous to introduce the subject abruptly. Our Lord, who knew what was in his heart, proceeded at once to answer his thoughts rather than his words: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again," (or *from above*,) "he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Jesus saw that His aged interlocutor was so firmly rooted in the soil of legal worldliness, that he could not be won to the truth by didactic discourse. So he shattered his pharisaic pride and self-righteousness by a sudden lightning-stroke. As if He had said; "Nicodemus, you have come to inquire concerning the kingdom of God, of which you regard yourself as a citizen and heir; but I, the true and faithful Witness, assure you that the nature of God's kingdom is such that *no man*—not merely no Gentile, but no man—not even a child of Abraham, can discern, much less possess it, unless he is new-born from above."

Nicodemus was startled and perplexed. The idea of a new birth was not indeed new to him; for, when a Gentile proselyte was received into the Old-Covenant church, he was said to be born again; just as we say of a foreigner who becomes a citizen of the United States, he is *naturalized*; that is to say, he is made a *native citizen*. But what meaning should we attach to the words of one who should say; "No man, not even a native American, can become a citizen of the United States without being naturalized? Just as little meaning could Nicodemus attach to the say-

* John iii. 3.

ing of our Lord concerning the necessity of a new birth, in order to admission into the kingdom of God. He regarded himself as an heir of that kingdom by virtue of his descent from Abraham; he was not an alien, but a natural citizen; how then could he be *naturalized*? How could he, by birth and circumcision a member of the theocratic nation, be born again? Perhaps, too, he was slightly irritated at being told abruptly that he, the wise ruler and teacher, the devout Pharisee, stood in need of a change so radical as a new birth clearly implied.

Too shrewd and self-collected, however, to be thrown entirely off his guard, Nicodemus resorted to his rabbinical dialectics, and attempted to show that the requirement of Jesus was absurd and extravagant. "How," said he, "can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* This was assuredly a wilful misunderstanding of our Lord's words,—a misapprehension affected for the sake of argument. "You certainly do not mean to be understood literally; but what else you can mean I cannot understand. Why and how a Jew must be born again, in order to enjoy the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, is beyond my comprehension."

Without suffering Himself to be discomposed in the least, by this unmeaning cavil, Jesus answers, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God."† Thus He teaches Nicodemus that the new birth of which He is speaking is not an external and relative change, but internal and spiritual, though outwardly represented by a sacramental sign. "That which is born of the flesh," He continues, is "flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit."‡

* John iii. 4.

† John iii. 5.

‡ John iii. 6.

The language of our Lord is to this effect: Every act of generation involves an impartation of life. But nothing can impart a kind of life which it does not itself possess; that which is begotten bears the nature of that which begat it. Nothing can spring from the natural sensuous life, except what is natural and sensuous. The *flesh*, corrupt and perishable, can not generate a life which is spiritual and immortal. *This* must come from spirit. Man can not therefore originate the spiritual life in himself; but he must be born from *above*,* that is to say, of the Holy Spirit. None can inherit the kingdom of God, to whom the incarnate Word, through the spirit, does not impart a principle of spiritual life, different in *kind* from the life of nature, and above it. "Since Christ represents this new birth as indispensable, in doing so he marks the relation in which the man who is not yet filled with the life of Christ, stands to the kingdom of God. He attains it not by his theological science, nor by his logical deductions; he has it not in his religious energy. It is a new creation from heaven, which must bury his old life in its consecrated stream in order to give him a new life,—a mystery of life in which he must become a subject of the formative power of divine grace, like an unborn child. The more he anticipates this creative power, yearns for it, and humbly receives it into his life, so much nearer is he to the kingdom of God."† The new life is developed in the regenerate soul as a principle of *holiness*, of faith, hope, love, obedience; as a mortifying, cleansing power, overcoming and extirpating sinful affections and propensities, purifying and consecrating the very body, and preserving both soul and body to life everlasting.

Thus men are born of the spirit; but how are they "born of water, and why?" These words, which have

* *ἄνωθεν* See Alford, in loco. † Lange's "Life of Christ," vol. 2, p. 312.

furnished matter for endless theological controversy, plainly refer to Christian baptism. Our Lord declares that a two-fold regeneration is necessary, answerable to the two-fold nature of the kingdom of God. That kingdom is outward and visible, as well as internal and spiritual. It is externalized in visible ordinances and a visible church. A man can only enter this two-fold kingdom, by being born both of the spirit and of water. He must be born of the spirit, because the kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; he must be born of water, because the same kingdom is a visible community of saints, joined together by outward rites and sacraments as well as by the same indwelling spirit. "Water baptism signifies entrance into the true theocratic society; and this society was constituted by Christ to be the historical foundation and main condition of the operations of His spirit, which presuppose the community that has been collected round the name of Christ, acknowledges His word, and is distinguished from the impure world by its public, common purification. With his entrance into the new society by baptism, he dies to the old world and renounces its vain pomps and godless spirit, and enters into the divinely appointed conditions which are requisite to the development of the life engendered in him by the Holy Ghost."* Thus he is born of water. Spiritual regeneration and regeneration by water are, however, not necessarily connected in respect to time, much less causation. The Saviour does not ascribe to water-baptism a magical or miraculous efficacy by which the soul is renewed; He ascribes the inward quickening only to an immediate divine energy.

There was a special reason why Jesus insisted on the necessity of baptism to *Nicodemus*. He had come se-

* Lange's "Life of Christ," volume 2, pages 310, 311.

cretly, *by night*, hoping perhaps that Christ, on account of his high position and the services he had it in his power to render, would exempt him from a public avowal of his faith. This hope was at once annihilated by the abrupt declaration that there was no way into the kingdom of God but through baptism.* Christ would acknowledge no man as his disciple who did not openly confess Him before the world.

Poor Nicodemus! his rabbinical wisdom is confounded; his pharisaical pride is humbled; his timidity is rebuked. He sits in speechless amazement and distress. "Marvel not," said Jesus, pressing the thought further, "Marvel not, that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit."† Probably the night-wind was at that moment moaning round the place where they were sitting. Jesus, in effect, says to Nicodemus, "What I have said strikes you as mysterious, and you are tempted for that reason to reject it. But do you hear the wind without? Though you know not its origin, or the laws of its movements, you believe in its reality. Why then do you wonder that the spirit, that free, life-giving air from heaven, that breath of God, should be equally mysterious? Can you understand the way of the spirit? Can you fathom his energy in the regeneration of souls?"

Nicodemus is still, not incredulous perhaps, but stupefied with wonder. "How can these things be?"‡ he exclaims. He feels himself destitute of that spiritual life which has been described; he would fain experience the heavenly quickening, but he trembles at the thought "whether such a spring-storm of awakening spiritual life can possibly

* Ecce Homo, pages 97, 98.

† John vii. 8.

‡ John iii. 9.

pass through his aged breast.”* Jesus, instead of at once speaking words of encouragement and comfort, strikes him with another thunder-bolt which must have utterly shattered his pride and self-righteousness. “Art thou a master of Israel (or rather, the teacher of Israel), and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”†

These sublime words seem to have closed the interview. Nicodemus returned to his own house, meditating on what he had heard. The germ of living truth had been planted in his heart; and at length the timid and conservative, but candid and noble inquirer, found courage openly to profess his faith in the crucified Nazarene.

* Lange's "Life of Christ," vol. 2, page 313

† John xi. 15.

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN AND HIS DISCIPLES, ON OUR LORD'S BAPTIZING.

JESUS LEAVES JERUSALEM AND BAPTIZES—JOHN AT ENON—HIS DISCIPLES TAKE OFFENCE AT OUR LORD'S BAPTIZING—JOHN'S REPLY TO THEIR OBJECTIONS—JOHN'S TESTIMONY TO THE DIVINITY OF JESUS—HE CORRECTS THE EXAGGERATION OF HIS DISCIPLES—HE CONTINUES HIS TESTIMONY TO THE DIVINE MISSION AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS—OUR LORD'S BAPTISM AND THAT OF JOHN COMPARED.

How long our Lord tarried at Jerusalem after His conversation with Nicodemus, we can not certainly determine. Probably He left Jerusalem soon after the close of the Passover week. The presumption is, also, that He went directly into a rural district of Judea, not far from the borders of Samaria. Some suppose that He returned to Galilee, and spent several months in retirement; but of this there is no evidence whatever.

John was at this time baptizing at Enon, near Salim identified by Jerome and most modern scholars with the ancient Salumnias, in the valley of the Jordan. If this is correct, the large-hearted Baptist, though a prophet of the old covenant and a preacher of the law, did not hesitate to exercise his ministry within the limits of Samaria. He had taken up his abode there for a short period, because it was a place of much water, and therefore convenient for baptizing. He had now been preaching the kingdom of God and baptizing unto repentance for about a year, and he still prosecuted his work, faithfully "fulfilling his course." Though he knew that the Messiah had

come, and though there had been, of late, a falling off of the multitudes who had come flocking to him wherever he went, he did not pause in his labors:—he had received no discharge from Him whose prophet he was.

In the meantime, the noblest and most enlightened of his disciples had, in accordance with his instructions, attached themselves to another and greater Teacher. There were, however, others of John's disciples who were strongly attached to him, and who were therefore impatient of any apparent rivalry of their master, or decline of his popularity. These learned with some irritation that Jesus was preaching and baptizing in the neighborhood, and that all the people were flocking to Him. Their jealousy, thus excited, was heightened by a dispute with a certain Jew,* who seemed to give the preference to the *purifying* or baptism of Jesus. Full of indignation, they came to their master with the complaint: "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, the same baptizeth and all men come to Him."† They thought their master was wronged; they intimated that Jesus was *his* disciple, and ought not to have led what looked like a rival movement; and they expected, perhaps, that John would sympathize with them in their resentment.

In this they were disappointed. They did not understand the noble, unselfish spirit of the Baptist. His reply is altogether beautiful: "A man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven."‡ "All comes to pass," says he "by divine appointment. No man can go beyond the limits of his commission from God; I can not therefore arrogate to myself what God has not given me; and

* The most authentic Greek text requires the singular rather than the plural.

† John iii. 26.

‡ John iii. 27.

the growing influence of Jesus proclaims His divine calling."* "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said," (at Bethabara, in answer to the messengers of the Sanhedrim): "I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before HIM,"† namely, Jesus.‡ "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."§ "As the friend of the bridegroom," he would say, "I have prepared the marriage feast; I have led the Church of God, the bride, to Him. I now witness, not with envy, but rather with joy, the glorious union; and I enter into the happiness of the bridegroom, as His voice gives assurance that my mission is happily completed." "He must increase, but I must decrease."|| "My mission is almost ended; the enthusiasm of the people will be more and more transferred to Him; He will become more and more the centre of interest, while I shall retire into obscurity."

And now the full inspiration of the greatest of the prophets breaks forth in ever-memorable words: "He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth; He that cometh from heaven is above all."¶ The Baptist confesses that he is, in comparison with Christ, earthly-minded; and that even his prophetic illumination is dimmed by earthly vapors, and is but darkness compared with the clear intuition of Him who comes from heaven to be the Light of the world. Turning, now, to his disci-

* See Alford, Neander, Wetstein, in loco.

† John iii 28.

‡ The reference of *Him* is not to the Messiah in general, but to Jesus in particular. See Alford.

§ John iii 29.

|| John iii. 30.

¶ John iii 31.

ples, who had, through envy, exaggerated the number of those who came to Christ's baptism, John, through love, runs into an opposite exaggeration.* "And what He hath seen and heard that He testifieth, and no man receiveth His testimony."† Did you say *all men come to Him*? Have, then, the priests and rulers, the scribes and Pharisees believed in Him? Nay, the nation already rejects Him. And among those who come to Him, few, if any, are qualified to receive His heavenly testimony in its purity. Continuing his eulogy, John adds: "He that receiveth His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth the Spirit not by measure unto Him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on Him."‡ This denunciation of the Baptist is the last utterance of the old covenant,—the final peal of thunder from Mount Sinai.§ It is the last prophetic word of the lowly and austere, but humble, self-sacrificing forerunner and friend of the Divine Bridegroom.

The question has been raised, whether the baptism administered by Jesus during this period of His ministry, was in its nature identical with that of John. It must certainly be distinguished from the baptism instituted after His resurrection, which was a baptism into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and was more a sacrament of faith than of repentance. It can scarcely be supposed, either, that Jesus baptized into

* See De Ligny's (Jesuit) "Life of Christ," page 61.

† John iii. 32.

‡ John iii. 34-67.

§ Lange's "Life of Christ," volume 2, page 332.

His own name as the Messiah; for this was a character that He did not publicly assume, but rather concealed till a much later stage of His ministry. This early baptism, which seems to have lasted only a few weeks, and which, during that period, was only administered by the hands of His disciples, was undoubtedly like John's,—a preparatory ordinance, corresponding to the great burden of preaching,—“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” As long as the Baptist and Christ were not checked in their ministry, the Israelitish body politic might be regarded as a community making a transition from impurity to purity. But the Baptist being ultimately imprisoned, and the rulers and representatives of the Jewish Church not coming to the baptism of Christ, but rejecting Him, the rite as one of national purification became unmeaning and useless. It seems, therefore, to have ceased from this time.*

* Andrews' "Life of Christ," pages 159, 164; also, Lange's "Life of Christ," vol. 2. page 329.

CHAPTER VII.

JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

HOSTILITY OF THE PHARISEES TO JESUS—HE LEAVES JUDEA FOR SAMARIA—DEAN STANLEY'S VIEW OF THE COUNTRY—VANDEBILDE'S DESCRIPTION—THE SAMARITANS AND THEIR RELIGION—REASONS FOR THEIR REVERENCE FOR MOUNT GERIZIM—HOSTILITY OF THE JEWS TO THE SAMARITANS—RECIPROCAL HATRED OF THE SAMARITANS—APPROACH OF JESUS TO SAMARIA—JACOB'S WELL—JESUS ASKS DRINK OF A SAMARITAN WOMAN—HIS REPLY TO HER QUESTION OF SURPRISE—THE WOMAN'S RESPONSE AND REFERENCE TO JACOB—JESUS DECLARES HIS DIVINE SUPERIORITY OVER JACOB, AS POSSESSING THE GIFTS OF SPIRITUAL REFRESHING AND EVERLASTING LIFE—THE FULL AND DEEP SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS WORDS—THE WOMAN'S REQUEST FOR LIVING WATER, AND JESUS' REVELATION OF HER SPIRITUAL CONDITION—DE LIGNY'S COMMENT ON HER REPLY, "I HAVE NO HUSBAND"—HER REFERENCE TO THE SAMARITAN WORSHIP, AND THE JEWS' EXCLUSIVENESS—OUR LORD'S REPLY—PECULIAR ERROR OF THE SAMARITANS—COMMON ERROR OF BOTH JEWS AND SAMARITANS—A SPIRITUAL WORSHIP TO TAKE THE PLACE OF THE CEREMONIAL SYSTEM—THE WOMAN'S QUERY AS TO THE MESSIAH—JESUS DECLARES HIMSELF TO BE THE MESSIAH—THE DISCIPLES RETURN AND ASK HIM TO EAT—JESUS URGES THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS WORK—THE REWARD OF THE LABORER—THE WOMAN RETURNS TO THE CITY, AND SPREADS THE FAME OF JESUS—HE PREACHES THE WORD IN SAMARIA, AND MANY BELIEVE.

THE Pharisees had not yet come to an open rupture with Jesus; but their suspicions were excited, and the growing enthusiasm of the common people who came in large numbers to His baptism alarmed them. He had already become more formidable than John the Baptist to that powerful sect. Aware that a longer stay in Judea would bring on a premature conflict with these fanatical enemies, which it was His purpose for the present to

avoid, Jesus determined to return to Galilee. The nearest and most practicable route was through Samaria. A bigoted Jew would perhaps have made a detour through Perea, and thus avoided the territory of the despised and hated Samaritans. Jesus, however, was no bigot, and, besides, He had a great work to do among those very Samaritans; hence He would not turn aside from the direct road.

The country through which He passed was the fairest and most fruitful of central Palestine. This was especially true of the vale of Shechem or Sychar, called by the Greeks, Neapolis, and by the modern Arabs, Naplous. "A valley," says Dean Stanley, "green with grass, gray with olive gardens sloping down on each side; fresh springs rushing down in all directions; at the end, a white town with dome-shaped roofs, embosomed in all this verdure, lodged between the high mountains which extend on each side of the valley,—that on the north, Ebal; that on the south, Gerizim;—this is the aspect of Naplous."

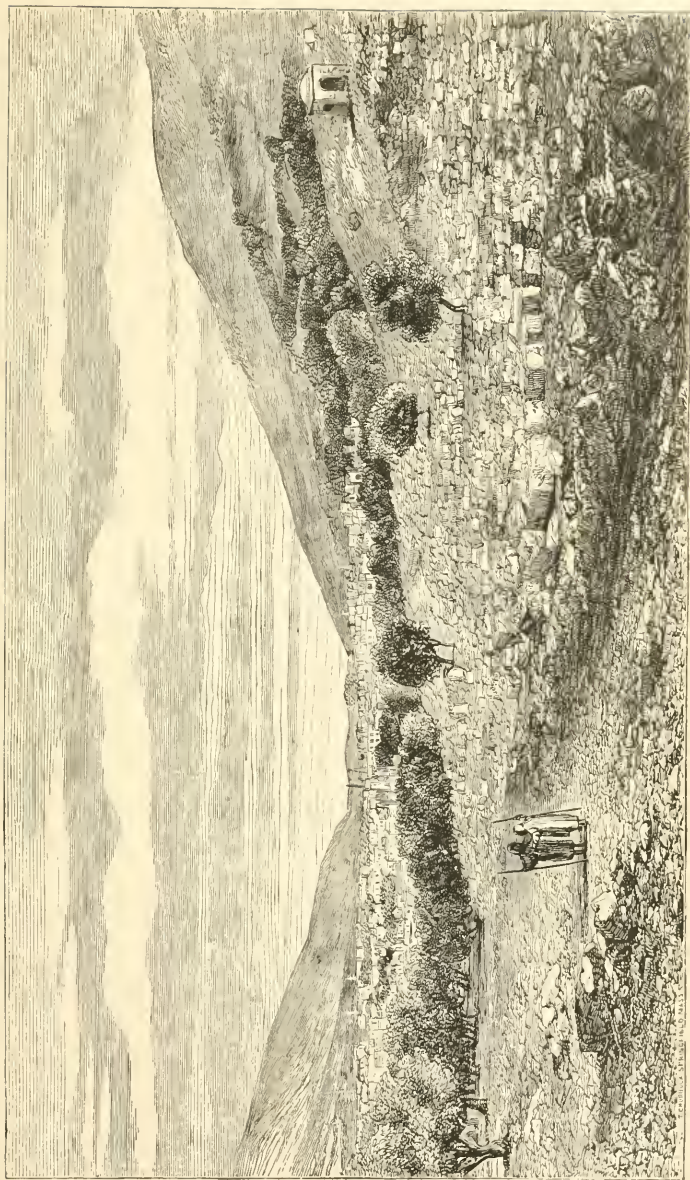
"Here," says another traveler, "there is no wilderness; here there are no wild thickets; yet there is always shade, not of the oak or of the terebinth, but of the olive-grove, so soft in color, so picturesque in form that, for its sake, we can willingly dispense with all other wood. Here there are no impetuous mountain torrents, yet there is water,—water, too, in more copious supplies than anywhere else in the land; and it is just to its many fountains, rills and water-courses, that the valley owes its exquisite beauty. The exhalations remain hovering among the branches and leaves of the olive-trees, and hence the lovely bluish haze that gives such a charm to the landscape. The valley is far from broad,—in some places not exceeding a few hundred feet. This you find generally enclosed on all sides; there, likewise, are the vapors condensed. And so you advance under the shade

of the foliage, along the living waters, and charmed by the melody of a host of singing birds,—for they, too, know where to find their best quarters,—while the perspective fades away and is lost in the damp vapory atmosphere.”*

The Samaritans, whom Jesus was about to visit, were not of the seed of Abraham, but were descended from a colony that Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, had planted there, after the country had been depopulated by the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel. This colony finally embraced the religion of Moses; and as, in the course of ages, many renegade and outcast Jews mingled with them, they at length began to assert their true and lineal descent from Abraham, through Jacob and Joseph. Under the direction of Manasseh, a priest who had married a Samaritan woman,—Sanballat built a temple on Mount Gerizim, which for two hundred years rivalled that at Jerusalem. After its destruction by the Asmonean prince, John Hyrcanus, about one hundred and fifty years before the time of our Lord, they still continued to venerate the mountain on which it had stood; and there, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, a feeble but interesting remnant of the race still offer the paschal lamb, and celebrate such rites of the law as their circumstances permit.

For this attachment to Mount Gerizim as a place of preëminent sanctity, the Samaritans had many plausible arguments. Modern scholars are inclining to the conviction that this was the mountain on which Melchizedek officiated as priest of the Most High, and that the Salem which lies a few miles to the east was the place of his residence. Mount Gerizim was the first spot on which Abraham halted, after he crossed the Jordan, where he rested

*Vandebilde, quoted by Stanley, “Sinai and Palestine,” pages 230 and 231.



SYCHAR (SHECHEM) FROM THE WEST.

and built an altar to the Lord. There are grounds of probability that it was here, and not on the Mount Moriah of Jerusalem, that he offered his son Isaac. Here, undoubtedly, Jacob pitched his tent, when he returned at the head of a tribe, rather than a household, from Mesopotamia. He bought the parcel of the field on which he first encamped, of Hamor, Shechem's father, and there he dug the famous well which is to this day a monument of his prudence in providing against the possible hostility of the people of the land. There too, Joseph, who by faith "gave command concerning his bones,"* was finally buried, and his sepulchre is shown even in our day, not far from the sacred well. Shechem had, besides, been the capital of the Ten Tribes, and was venerated by the whole nation, even after the building of Solomon's temple.

Between the Jews and the Samaritans there existed an ancient and bitter feud, which the lapse of ages only rendered the more implacable. It had its origin as far back as the return from the Babylonish captivity. The Samaritans had offered to assist the Jews in rebuilding the temple, and were rather scornfully repelled. This feeling of dislike among the Jews had deepened into a settled hatred. They treated the claim of the Samaritans to a lineal descent from Abraham with contempt, regarded them as aliens and heathens, and always spoke of them disparagingly as a *foolish people* and *no nation*. The very name of their sacred city, Sechem, or Sichem, had been changed by Jewish malice to *Sychar*, a name which signifies the "topey city," or the "heathen city."

This animosity was, perhaps, more than reciprocated by the Samaritans. They waylaid, robbed and maltreated Jewish pilgrims who passed through their territory, and in every possible way showed their contempt and hatred

* Hebrews xi. 22.

of the temple at Jerusalem. Not a great while before our Lord's visit, a Samaritan had stolen into the temple and polluted every accessible part of it with human bones,—than which no act could have awakened in the breast of a Jew greater loathing and horror. This may account in part for the fact that the "Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans."

Such were the relations of the two races when our Lord entered the territory of Samaria. It was late in autumn, an oppressive and sultry season in that climate. The natives were busily engaged in sowing their fields, which were among the most fertile in Palestine. The mountains were indeed sterile and bare, but there were several valleys of surpassing fruitfulness and beauty. Our Saviour's path lay through one of these valleys. All the forenoon He seems to have toiled over the sultry plain. About noon He arrived at JACOB'S WELL. This well, as already intimated, is still in existence, and is frequently visited by travelers, who at certain seasons find in it a great depth of refreshingly cool and pure water, though at other seasons it is quite dry. It is situated at the mouth of the charming though narrow valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, and is a natural resting-place for dusty and toil-worn travelers between Jerusalem and Galilee. Here Jesus sat down to rest, while the disciples, already somewhat raised above the prevailing Jewish prejudices, went into the neighboring city to buy food.

Soon after their departure a Samaritan woman, coming perhaps from her labor in the field, or from her cottage in the vicinity, or drawn from the city itself by her liking for the water of this particular well, approached the place with her water-pot. Jesus, with gentle courtesy, said to her, "Give me to drink." The woman perceiving from his garb and speech that He was of the hated race, and therefore surprised at his addressing her in a kind and

respectful manner, and at his desire to drink from the vessel of a Samaritan, answered, probably in a half-jesting, half-sarcastic manner, "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me who am a woman of Samaria?"* Our Lord, having excited her curiosity and wonder, replies in words full of meaning, yet a little ambiguous: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water."†

At this reply the woman must have been perplexed. "What can He mean?" said she to herself. "He has just begged water of me; and now He tells me that He has living water to give away. The water of this well sometimes fails: besides, He has nothing to draw with; He cannot mean this water; does he then mean another fountain?" "Sir," said she, "this well is very deep, and Thou hast nothing to draw with; whence then hast Thou that living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank of it himself, and his children and his cattle?"‡ She feels that Jesus is no ordinary man; but she cannot think Him superior to Jacob who gave them the water of this well. He cannot give better water than Jacob gave; Jacob's well against all the fountains of the world! Thus she stands for the Samaritan tradition.

Jesus now draws her on to a comparison between the water of this well and that living water which He alone could give: "Whosoever shall drink of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."§ The poor woman knows that something wonderful has been said. The words, "ever-

* John iv. 9. † John iv. 10. ‡ John iv. 11, 12. § John xiii. 14.

lasting life" suddenly remind her of the wants of her eternity; and she is fast becoming conscious of a thirst which no earthly fountain can quench. Her dark mind has a dim perception of a spiritual meaning; but what it is, she cannot clearly discern.

We can see what she could not,—that when Jesus speaks of living water, He means that spiritual life which He came to impart to men; not water for the toil-worn, thirsty body, but water for the longing, fainting soul,—holiness, peace, freedom, SALVATION. "This gift of God and this living water are nothing else than the Holy Ghost, who extinguishes in souls the thirst after the pleasures of sense and perishable goods, who deadens the ardors of concupiscence, who waters the aridity of the heart by refreshing sentiments of piety, and who renders the soul fruitful in good works: truly living water in itself and in its effects, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost, being life, gives life to those souls who receive Him."* Nicodemus receives the promise of the regenerating Spirit under the symbol of the blowing wind, which brings the fresh, vernal life; the woman of Sychar receives it under the symbol of a perennial fountain springing up in the depths of the soul, satisfying all the obscure longings of her immortal nature.†

Deeply moved by what she heard, yet not as yet able to detach the spiritual from the literal sense, she answers: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."‡ The words express an awakening confidence in the wonderful Stranger. She longs to receive whatever He has to impart under the name of living water. But her eyes must be turned within, she must be

* De Ligny's "Life of Christ," page 64; an exposition worthy of Calvin.

† Lange's "Life of Christ," vol. 2, page 342.

‡ John iv. 15.

made distinctly conscious of her sinfulness and misery before she can drink of the water of life. Jesus, therefore, fixing his eyes upon her, abruptly said to her: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither."* She is probably startled by the unexpected nature of this command; but she does not lose her self-possession. She quietly replies: "I have no husband;"† so much she may say without disclosing her own shame. Her conscience, however, must be deeply probed. She must look her sins full in the face and confess them. "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."‡

Commenting upon this, De Ligny§ utters a quaint and striking remark, which curiously betrays the Father Confessor. "If this was not naturally a good woman, she must have become so already during her interview with Christ,—for instead of giving Him the lie, as many others would have done, and with greater assurance the more foundation there was for the reproach, she answered respectfully, and with shame acknowledged her guilt." "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet."|| She confessed that her life had been one of sin. She had probably lost some of her husbands by death; she had been divorced for sufficient reasons, by others; and she was at that time living with one to whom she was bound by no legal ties.

What a moment was this for that poor sinful creature, standing in the presence of spotless purity, under those calm, pitying eyes, which, she felt, searched the darkest recesses of her soul. But something in His words,—perhaps also the divine compassion expressed in His countenance, kept her from despair. She was now more eager

* John iv. 16.

† John iv. 17.

‡ John iv. 17, 18.

§ "Life of Christ," page 67.

|| John iv. 19.

than ever for instruction. "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain," she said, pointing to the neighboring Gerizim, "but ye say that in Jerusalem men ought to worship,"* The woman probably refers here, not only to the times of Sanballat and the apostate priest Manasseh, who established a temple and an altar on that mountain, but to the patriarchs, especially Jacob, who had undoubtedly worshiped there. At any rate, the Samaritans had from time immemorial regarded Mount Gerizim as eminently holy, while the Jews rightly claimed that God had chosen Mount Moriah as the seat of that public sacrificial worship which the law required. Private worship of the living and true God in any place had never been forbidden, but on the contrary strictly enjoined.

Our Lord's reply is wonderfully sublime and comprehensive: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship—for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."†

The Saviour here declares without parable or metaphor, to this ignorant and sinful yet child-like and open-hearted woman, what would have confounded the most learned scribe of Jerusalem,—the spiritual nature and universality of true religion. Hitherto, the true worship of God, though not without a spiritual element, had been local, external and typical. Now, however, a new worship was about to be set up, which, though it would clothe itself in outward forms, would be substantially and distinctively inward and

* John iv. 20.

† John iv. 21–24.

spiritual, and therefore not confined to any particular place or nation.

The Samaritans were wrong, in several points. They erred in keeping up an unauthorized and schismatical worship on Mount Gerizim. Besides, rejecting as they did the prophets, they worshiped in comparative ignorance; they were without that living knowledge of God which was only possible to those who stood within the sphere of the organic development of divine revelation. Their conception of the character and government of Jehovah was defective and dead, while the Jews had clear and definite views of God, and of the way in which He might be acceptably worshiped. Above all, *salvation was of the Jews*. The Saviour, as all the prophets in long succession had witnessed, was to be the Seed of Abraham and the Son of David—a Jew and not a Samaritan.

In one very important point, however, both Jews and Samaritans were at fault;—in failing to discover the altogether temporary character of all worship purely local and ceremonial, and its necessary subversion by the spiritual and universal. The time was even now at hand, when the outward and ceremonial part of the religion of Moses was to pass away. Even Jerusalem should soon cease to be the chosen dwelling-place of Jehovah. The daily sacrifice would no longer be offered; the incense no longer ascend from the golden altar; the chantings of the Levites would die away into eternal silence; the train of white-robed priests would disappear; the veil which concealed the most holy place would be rent in twain; even the temple itself would be overthrown and not one stone be left upon another. The time was at hand when the Jew should not be accepted because he worshiped at Jerusalem, any more than the Samaritan because he worshiped at Mount Gerizim; but those and those only would be accepted, who worshiped God as a *Father* in spirit and

in truth. The true religion would become universal,—the religion, not of Jew or Samaritan, but of humanity. Everywhere would men adore the Father, not so much in outward rites as *in spirit*,—in the oblation of holy affections, obedient wills, and penitent, believing, loving hearts. And this worship would be *in truth*;—not only sincere, but the *reality* which the Mosaic worship foreshadowed; for it would be offered in the name of Christ, the substantial TRUTH, and of the Holy Ghost, the spirit of truth. This kind of worship was what God desired of man, what he sought, what he was at that very moment seeking of this benighted soul.

We picture to ourselves the woman standing as one entranced. The divine light is breaking through the cloud which has so long enveloped her soul; and she hails it as light from heaven. A strange thrilling thought flashes upon her mind: “Who is this wonderful stranger? I feel that He is a prophet, and more than a prophet; can it be, oh, can it be, that He is the Christ so long expected?” She continues her soliloquy aloud: “I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ; when He is come He will tell us all things.”*

The Samaritans, whose conception of the Messiah must have been drawn from the words of Moses touching the great Prophet or Teacher,† who should gather the people to Himself, had not fallen into the perverted Jewish idea of a national and secular Messiah. They looked for a Teacher, Converter and Guide, not for a temporal Deliverer and Prince. In this outlying Samaritan world, therefore, it was possible for Jesus plainly to declare His character and mission. So He said to the woman already grasping at the great truth, “I THAT SPEAK UNTO THEE AM HE.” Joy, joy to thee, “thou precious winner!”

* John xviii. 25.

† See Deuteronomy xviii. 25.

Thy bonds are broken ; thy sins are forgiven ; the water of life gushes up and flows softly like the waters of Siloam, in thy regenerate soul ! Thy burning thirst is quenched, and “every longing satisfied.”

What the woman would have said in reply to our Lord’s avowal, we can only conjecture, for the conversation was just then interrupted by the return of the disciples from the city. They wondered to find their Master engaged in earnest conversation with a Samaritan woman, as well they might, considering their national prejudices, but they asked no questions, and spreading out their provisions, entreated Him to eat. Ever mindful of their spiritual instruction, he said to them, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.”* They whisper one to another, “hath any man brought Him aught to eat?”† Jesus saith unto them, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest ? Behold I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to the harvest.”‡ As if he had said, “To carry forward to completion the work which the Father hath given me to do, is more to Me than food for my body ; it is my pleasure, my nourishment, my life ! And this work admits of no delay. You have a saying at this season of seed-time, that there are four months till harvest, but look yonder,” (pointing to the Samaritans now thronging the paths from the city,) “the harvest is already ripe for the sickle.”

Jesus continues, “He that reapeth” (in this spiritual harvest field,) “receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.” The Lord of the harvest will abundantly reward him, and the fruit he gathers,—*the souls he converts*,—shall be unto everlasting salvation, “that both he

* John viii. 32.

† John viii. 33.

‡ John viii. 34, 35

that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, one soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor, other men labored and ye have entered into their labors.”* The sowers to whom Jesus refers were Moses, and the priests who had converted the Samaritans from heathenism to the worship of the one living and true God. Perhaps, also, He alludes to the recent labors of John the Baptist, who may have awakened in the hearts of many Samaritans a longing for the Messiah, and a belief that He was at hand.

In the meanwhile, the woman, finding farther conversation with Jesus interrupted, leaves her pitcher, and, full of wonder and joy, hastens to the city, and spreads abroad the news of the marvelous stranger at Jacob’s well. “Come, see a man,” she exclaims, “which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”† Her zeal makes her forgetful of her reputation; she does not hesitate to proclaim our Lord’s supernatural knowledge of her sins, as a proof of his being the Christ.‡ Her sincerity, her new-born love, the surprising change visible in her aspect and bearing, all combined to render her appeal irresistible. Speedily the people go thronging forth towards Jacob’s well: they come to Jesus: they entreat Him to enter their city.

Acceding to their request, Jesus enters the city and abides with them two days, working no miracles, but charming the people with His heavenly discourse. They listen to His words; they believe; they rejoice; for the salvation which is of the Jews, rejected at Jerusalem, has come to Sychar. “And many more believed because of

* John iv. 37, 38.

† John iv. 29.

‡ See De Ligny’s “Life of Christ,” page 67.

His own word ; and said unto the woman, Now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world."* Thus was the seed sown, from which, probably, sprang the full harvest reaped some years later by the evangelist Philip, and by John and Peter, when there was again great joy in that city.†

* John iv. 41, 42.

† Acts viii. 5-8.

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS HEALS THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.

GALILEE—LIBERAL VIEWS OF THE GALILEANS—THEIR FAVORABLE RECEPTION OF JESUS—THE NOBLEMAN'S SON LIES DYING—THE FATHER APPEALS TO JESUS—WILL JESUS GO TO CAPERNAUM AT HIS BIDDING?—HE REBUKES THE WONDER-SEEKING PROPENSITY OF THE PEOPLE—THE NOBLEMAN PRESSES HIS PETITION IN FAITH—JESUS HEALS THE CHILD—THE CONVERSION OF THE NOBLEMAN'S HOUSEHOLD—JESUS PASSES INTO TEMPORARY RETIREMENT.

IN the time of our Lord, Galilee, one of the provinces into which Palestine was divided, (the other two being Judea and Samaria,) included the whole northern section of the country, from the borders of Tyre and Sidon to the southern extremity of the great plain of Jezreel, or Esdraclon. Originally, however, the name was confined to a small "circuit,"—such is the meaning of the word,—around Kedesh-Naphtali, in which were situated the twenty towns given by Solomon to Hiram, king of Tyre.* This was old Galilee, Galilee proper; upper Galilee, Galilee of the Gentiles. After the name was extended to the whole northern half of the country, it would seem that the inhabitants of lower Galilee still spoke of what anciently bore the name as simply Galilee. An inhabitant of Nazareth, for example, which was in lower Galilee, when speaking of a journey to the vale of Gennesaret, in upper Galilee, would naturally say he had visited Galilee. So if he had passed through *Cana* he would probably use

* 1 Kings ix. 11.

the same expression.* Galilee, at this time, sustained an immense population. According to Josephus, the cities and villages lay close together, and many of the latter contained not less than fifteen thousand souls. The people seem to have been industrious, thrifty, and more liberal minded than the inhabitants of Judea. Their intercourse with Gentiles, especially the Greeks, had perhaps, somewhat softened their Jewish bigotry, and rendered them less intolerant toward the teachers of new doctrines.

However this may be, it is certain that on returning to Galilee, after His sojourn in Samaria, our Lord met with a favorable reception. For having passed by Nazareth, in lower Galilee, and gone to Cana, in Galilee proper, the Galileans received Him gladly. The people of Cana and its vicinity, in particular, remembered how He had made the water wine; and many of them had witnessed His glorious miracles at Jerusalem. It is probable that His mother and brethren were then residing there; and He seems to have remained there in comparative seclusion for several weeks, probably indeed, for months. Only one or two incidents of this period are recorded; but we can not doubt that He taught the people and proclaimed the Kingdom of God among the villages of that rural upland region.

The arrival of Jesus at Cana appears to have been well known at Capernaum, where he had many friends. Capernaum was at this time a flourishing city, full of stately dwellings, and abounding in wealth and luxury. But riches are no defense against sickness and sorrow. In one of the palaces of Capernaum there is weeping and lamentation. There is sickness there, and as is feared, sickness unto death. A nobleman bends over a couch,

* See Smith's "Bible Dictionary," in loco; Lange's "Life of Christ," volume 2, page 356; also, for another view, Andrews' "Life of Christ," pages 168, 169.

with a sad and mournful countenance; for there lies his darling son, burning with fever; the disease baffles all medical skill, and seems to be rapidly approaching a fatal termination. The father *can not* give up his child; his son *must* not die. But what is he to do? A thought occurs to him. He hears that Jesus, the new prophet of Nazareth, whom he had, perhaps, seen at Jerusalem, and of whose wonderful miracles he had heard such startling rumors, is now at Cana of Galilee. Blinded by aristocratic prejudices and religious bigotry, he has hitherto stood aloof from Jesus; but these all melt away under the fires of adversity. Jesus, perhaps, can save his child; it is at any rate his only hope. He will send to Cana; nay, he will go himself, and entreat the Prophet to come speedily to his dying boy. In a few hours he reaches Cana, and prays our Lord to go down at once and heal his son, now at the point of death.*

Surely Jesus, this great physician so full of divine tenderness and power, will at once set out for Capernaum? No, He will not be a wonder-working physician to men of rank and wealth: He will not be drawn from His chosen sphere of labor, by their importunity: He will meet the billows of their merely natural excitement with the serene, steadfast peace of God in His own soul. He will not go down to Capernaum at the solicitation of this nobleman. He will hold the proud and noble at respectful distance. He will improve the occasion to rebuke the wonder-loving tendencies of the people. Our Lord knew His visitor, for He knew what was in man. This nobleman, who was doubtless a Jew, had evidently been among those who required a *sign*, an external and splendid miracle, as a proof of our Lord's divine mission. Perhaps too, he had wished to *see* a sign with his own eyes, and he

* See John iv. 47.

may have been in the temple when the Jews came to Jesus and said, "what *sign* showest Thou unto us, seeing Thou doest these things?" However this may be, Jesus now, as at all times, reproved this greed of marvels, which was in fact rooted in unbelief. He addressed the petitioner abruptly, almost sternly, in words of rebuke, intended to reach the bystanders also, "unless ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."*

The anxious parent was, however, not repelled by this rebuke. He doubtless felt its justice. Besides, the words of Jesus, sudden and terrible as a lightning stroke, flashed in upon his troubled soul the conviction that simple faith was the indispensable condition of the cure of his darling child. He discovers, too, a hidden encouragement in this reproof, an implied promise, even in the seeming repulse. If he *can* believe without sign, then the cure is not impossible. And he can. Tacitly confessing his sin, he says with a full heart, "Sir, come down ere my child die!"† He has faith like a grain of mustard seed. Though the thought does not occur to him, as it did to the centurion afterwards (who, however, must have been cognizant of this miracle,) that Jesus can heal his child at a distance, much less that He can raise him from the dead, he does believe that if the Lord can but *see his child* he will live. The faith of Martha and Mary—"Lord, if thou hadst been here our brother had not died"‡—seems not to have been greater.

The point has now been gained: the lesson has been taught. Jesus will not go down to Capernaum, but the child shall not die; faith shall have its reward. With a countenance changed from severity to benign interest and love, Jesus says to him: "Go thy way; thy son liveth."§ "In the very same moment that this life-ray of deliver-

* John iv. 48.

† John iv. 49.

‡ John xi. 32.

§ John iv. 50.

ance darted into the father's heart, it darted into the heart of his distant son."* The father doubted not. So strong was his assurance that his child was restored, that he did not return home till the next day, though it was but the seventh hour,—one o'clock P. M.,—when the life-giving word was spoken. As he was leisurely returning, his servants met him with the joyful tidings that his son was well. "When did he begin to amend?" he inquired. "Yesterday," they replied, "at the seventh hour, the fever left him"†—the very moment when Jesus said, "thy son liveth." No wonder that the nobleman believed and all his house. There was great joy when he reached his house and again embraced his son. Doubtless he told his family about his interview with Jesus—doubtless they all longed to thank Him for His goodness, and if the nobleman was, as has been conjectured, Chuza, Herod's steward, we can understand the feeling which prompted his noble wife, Joanna, to follow Jesus up to Jerusalem and minister to Him of her wealth.

After the performance of this miracle, we hear little of our Lord until His return to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Passover. His disciples appear to have retired to their respective homes soon after His arrival at Cana; and He Himself probably now withdrew into comparative seclusion. Indeed, a variety of circumstances lead to the conclusion, that this was His object in returning to Galilee rather than the active prosecution of His mission.‡ That mission could not be consistently and fully inaugurated until that of the Baptist had been brought to its completion. He had already done enough to evince the divine relation of the two, and to verify and sustain the predictions and preaching of the Baptist. He now waits in peaceful retirement the full appointed time.

* Lange. † John iv. 52 ‡ See Andrews' "Life of Christ," p. 170.

CHAPTER IX.

JESUS HEALS THE IMPOTENT MAN.

JESUS GOES UP THE SECOND TIME TO JERUSALEM—HIS PECULIAR CHOICE OF GALILEE AS HIS CHIEF FIELD OF LABOR—THE FEAST PROBABLY THE PASSOVER—JESUS AMONG THE MULTITUDE—BETHESDA—JESUS HEALS THE IMPOTENT MAN—THE JEWS REBUKE THE IMPOTENT MAN—THEIR EFFORT TO DISCOVER JESUS, AND ITS FAILURE—JESUS MEETS THE IMPOTENT MAN THE SECOND TIME, AND ADMONISHES HIM—SPECIAL RETRIBUTION IN THIS LIFE—THE IMPOTENT MAN MAKES JESUS KNOWN TO THE JEWS—THEY ASSAIL HIM OPENLY—PECULIAR OPENING OF OUR LORD'S DEFENSE—THE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE REPOSE—THE PERPETUITY OF GOD'S ACTIVITY—ESPECIAL PROOF OF OUR LORD'S DIVINITY—ESPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REPLY OF THE JEWS—JESUS DECLARES HIS UNITY WITH THE FATHER—HE DECLARES THE GROUND OF THAT UNITY—HE SPECIFIES CERTAIN WORKS IN WHICH THAT UNITY EXISTS—THE JEWS SILENCED BUT NOT CONCILIATED—THEIR EMBARRASSMENT IN CARRYING OUT THEIR HOSTILE PURPOSES.

EMERGING, at length, from the retirement, of which mention was made in the previous chapter, Jesus leaves Galilee and goes up for the second time to Jerusalem. His immediate object is to attend "a feast of the Jews;" for it will be observed that the several journeys which He made to Jerusalem were only such as were required by law, and that, as soon as the immediate occasion of His visit had passed, He left the city, seeming to have a special disinclination to make it for any time His abode.

Indeed it is a noticeable fact that Jesus kept aloof from Jerusalem, the center of intellectual activity and influence, where He might, as it would seem, have brought His doctrines to bear upon the leading minds of the nation; and spent the larger portion of His public life in Galilee, pass-

ing from village to village along the shores of Gennesaret, and among its vine-clad hills, followed by fishermen and publicans as His trusted friends and disciples. That He did so, and yet, by a brief ministry of three years and a half impressed Himself on the mind and heart of the world more deeply than any man who has ever lived, is in itself a sufficient proof of His divine character and mission.

Much diversity of opinion prevails among scholars, as to what feast this was, which our Lord went up to Jerusalem to attend. Some suppose it to have been the feast of Purim; others incline to the belief that it was the Passover. The question is chiefly important as bearing upon the time during which our Lord prosecuted His public ministry. If it was the feast of Purim, his public ministry must have lasted only about two years and a half. If it was the Passover, as the most judicious commentators suppose, it enables us to settle quite conclusively the fact that it continued for a longer period. This supposition would give us four Passovers during his ministry,—the first occurring, probably, about six months subsequent to His baptism, and the last in connection with His crucifixion and death. This gives us for the duration of His public labors a period of about three years and a half,—a period foreshadowed in the prophecy of Daniel.* The subject is, it must be owned, attended with an almost hopeless uncertainty. The evangelist has given us no clue whatever to a right solution. A somewhat celebrated Roman Catholic commentator, *Maldonatus*, seems inclined to quarrel with him on account of this omission. We may, however, be thankful that a wise inspiration has thus baffled and mortified a vain, though learned, curiosity. The point at issue is by no means vital to a full and harmonious conception of the character and mission of Jesus. Whether

*See Daniel, ix. 27.

He labored on earth a year less or more, is of no consequence, so far as the work of man's salvation is concerned.

Let us now accompany our Lord to Jerusalem to witness the illustrious miracle which He there performed, and to listen to the memorable discourse to which it gave rise. The city was at this time thronged with myriads of people who had come up to attend the feast, not only from all parts of the Holy Land, but also from countries distant and foreign. The countless multitude is flowing in an unbroken stream toward the temple to witness its imposing rites and engage in its solemn worship. There is One, however, who takes a different direction. There is hard by a certain gate called the Sheep Gate, a remarkable fountain or pool, called Bethesda. It is said to possess at certain times, supernatural healing qualities. At such times, an angel descends and agitates the waters. Whoever, thereafter, steps first into the pool is immediately made whole, no matter with what disease he may be afflicted. So undoubting is the popular faith in this miraculous virtue of the fountain, that multitudes of invalids are gathered about it, waiting for the moving of the waters. For their accommodation a stately building has been erected, having five porches. These are now full of patients sick of divers maladies,—a sad and moving spectacle of diseased and distressed humanity.

The Stranger, accompanied by several persons in the garb of countrymen, enters the place. He looks around upon the crowd of sufferers with an expression of the deepest pity, but His present business is with a single individual. On one of the beds lies a man who has been a cripple for thirty years. During all that period, he has been perfectly helpless. His infirmity, probably paralysis, found him a young man, and now he is old. His manhood has withered away under this awful malady, and now he lies in the porch of Bethesda, and has long lain there, help-

less, yet faintly hoping that he may at last be healed by means of the supernatural virtue of its fountain.

Jesus approaches the sufferer. He knows how miserable his condition is, and how long he has lain thus. With accents full of compassion, He says to him, "wilt thou be made whole?"* "Sir," he replies, "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."† He seems to have supposed, from the question asked, that Jesus, whom he did not know, doubted whether he really wished to be healed. Our Lord gives no heed to his misapprehension. The attention of the sufferer has been secured and his interest awakened, by the question, and this seems to have been the Saviour's design. He now stands forth in His divine character as the Lord of life and health and blessing. He says to the impotent man: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."‡ It is no sooner said than done. The helpless cripple feels within himself that he is cured. He rises, takes up his couch, and leaves the place which had so long witnessed his suffering and patient waiting.

As he joyfully walked through the streets, feeling, we doubt not, rather like a disembodied spirit than a being of flesh and blood, he was met by certain Jews of the stricter sort, who reproved him for carrying his bed on the Sabbath, charging it as a violation of the law. Evidently thinking that One who could heal such an infirmity as his had the right to *make law*, at least for *him*, the impotent man replied: "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, take up thy bed and walk."§ Now, mark the malice of these Jews. They ask in return, not "What man is that which *made thee whole*?" but "What man is that which said unto thee, take up thy bed and walk?"|| In their estimation, the

* John v. 6. † John v. 7. ‡ John v. 8. § John v. 11. || John v. 12.



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miracle was of no account, so long as it was accompanied by an apparent infraction of the letter of the law. They felt no interest in knowing who had power to bring such blessing to the wretched; they were only intent on discovering who had thus, as they regarded it, desecrated the Sabbath day. They would detect Him and visit Him with condign punishment. But their malicious purpose was thwarted; the desired information was not to be had. The man knew not who his benefactor was, and Jesus had disappeared in the crowd.

Not long after this,—how long, we are not told,—Jesus found the man who had been restored, in the temple, whither he had gone, probably, to render thanksgiving for his restoration to health. Knowing what his manner of life had been, and that his disease had been caused by the sins of his youth, our Lord gravely admonished him not to relapse into his former evil ways:—"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."* Already had thirty of the best years of his life been made a blank and a burden to him by his sins; how could a worse thing be brought upon him by a return to them? What could this *worse thing* be, unless it was the destruction of soul and body† in hell, of which our Lord spoke on another occasion? This case is a sufficient proof that God does sometimes visit the sins of men with special retribution in the present life. We can not, indeed, distinguish between those sufferings of our fellow-men which are special judgments and those which are merely, like the afflictions of Job, trials of our faith and patience. This should prevent us from indulging in either superstitious or uncharitable thoughts. Our inability, however, to determine its applications does not change the general fact. That some sins are marked out for special punishment in this

* John v. 14.

† See Matthew xii. 28.

life, is a natural and necessary inference from the words of Jesus as just quoted.

As the result of this second interview, the impotent man learned that his benefactor was Jesus, of whom, doubtless, he had heard much within the few months past. Going immediately to the Jews, not, we think, with any treacherous intent, but rather with the wish to honor his Divine Physician, he told them, not that it was Jesus who had commanded him to take up his bed and walk,—which he would have done had he been disposed to act the part of a thankless informer;—but “that it was Jesus which had made him whole.”* The Jews had now the information which they desired. It was, as they had suspected, Jesus, the object of their secret fear and hatred, who was responsible for this alleged public desecration of the Sabbath. Hitherto their opposition to Him had been covert; for they knew not how to justify themselves before the people, who were always ready to take part with Him. Now, however, they could fasten upon Him the charge of Sabbath-breaking, and He could not, as they thought, repel it. He had commanded the impotent man to carry a burden upon the Sabbath, which was a violation of the *letter* of the law. Besides this, in the estimation of these Jews, the mere act of *healing* was a desecration of the day. They were, therefore, filled with rage,—rage which, in their passionate self-delusion, they fancied to be holy indignation. They attacked our Lord in public,—it would seem in the temple,—charging Him with an open and flagrant infraction of the law,—with the daring sin of breaking the Sabbath.

Of the particulars of this exciting interview, the evangelist gives a minute account. The defence set up by Jesus, which is reported in full, is so sublime and beautiful

* John v. 15.

that it merits thoughtful attention. As the crime alleged was Sabbath-breaking, it seems probable that the Jews had cited the passage; "And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."* Whether this was quoted or not, it was doubtless in their minds, for Jesus opens His defence with a palpable reference to it, when he says; "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." †

Now, we must not understand our Lord as denying that God *rested* on the seventh day; but rather as announcing the sublime truth that in God there is a union of perfect rest with infinite and perpetual activity. His is the repose of infinite *wisdom*, incapable of surprise or disappointment; of infinite *power*, which nothing can resist or hinder, and whose greatest works are accomplished without weariness or effort; of absolute *immutableness*, which, in the center of a fluctuating universe, is a steadfast "Rock of Ages," even "from everlasting to everlasting;" of infinite *holiness*, whose unfathomable abysses of peace can never be disturbed by sin, or overshadowed by remorse.

Yet this God of peace, to whom all the cycles of eternity are one Sabbath, "*worketh hitherto.*" When He consecrated the seventh day, it was simply as a *memorial* that those mighty changes by which the present order of the universe was ushered in, were finished. There was, however, on that day, no withdrawal of the creative energy of Him who worketh all in all, from the things which He had made, else had

"This universal frame so wondrous fair,"

fallen back into chaos: it would have ceased to be. Pres-

* Genesis ii. 2, 3.

† John v. 17.

ervation, according to the schools, is continued creation. All the laws and properties of matter; all the phenomena of the material world; all that constitutes the world of mind;—all are but the outcomings of the creative will, acting according to its own immutable laws. Throughout every particle of every world in all these immeasurable oceans of space, God worketh at the present instant, and as truly as He did at the moment of their creation. The ancient heavens are kept young and unwrinkled, the old foundations of the everlasting hills solid and unmoved, by the vivifying energy of His secret presence. And all this eternal working is without weariness. “Hast thou not known; hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.”* Such is the grand truth, asserted by our Lord, in justification of His work of healing on the Sabbath day. It was no more a desecration of holy time than was the eternal working of the Father.

In this connection it is noticeable, that in nothing is the divinity of Jesus more apparent than in that union of Godlike repose and superhuman activity which is always visible in His person and actions. He performed His mightiest miracles, with as little effort as is put forth by God in carrying on the great processes of nature. The Sabbath of his soul was never interrupted for a moment, when life-giving virtue went out of Him, to heal the sick, or even to raise the dead. Besides, His working was patterned after that of His Father, in all its holiness and beneficence. He said on another occasion; “It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.”†

But this defence of our Lord, sublime as it seems to us, so far from convincing His adversaries, was regarded by

* Isaiah xl. 28.

† Matthew xii. 12.

them as blasphemous. They “sought the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath day, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”* A peculiar importance here attaches to this language of the exasperated Jews. It shows conclusively what they understood our Lord to mean when He spoke of Himself as the *Son of God*. They understood Him to assert His natural equality with the Father, and He, so far from even intimating that they were mistaken, positively confirms them in the view they had taken of His meaning.

He proceeds to declare in the most solemn manner, the perfect unity in power, knowledge, love and action between the Father and Himself. “Verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”† Here is unity of *operation*. He next declares the ground of that *unity*. ‘For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.”‡ This love of the Father to the Son is tantamount to entire *self-communication*; so that whatsoever the Father *knows*, and *does*, the Son also *knows* and *does*. The only difference between them is, that the knowledge and operation of the Father are from Himself alone; while the same knowledge and operation in the Son are from the Father by that *love*, or *self-communication*.

Our Lord further goes on to specify certain works in which there is this perfect unity of operation between Him and the Father; as, for example, the quickening of the dead, and the judging of mankind. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

* John v. 18.

† John v. 19.

‡ John v. 20.

that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.”* “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”† And all this is but the explicit expression of His first declaration: “My father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

The exposition of the remainder of our Lord's discourse is not vital to the narrative. The discourse, as a whole, seems to have silenced the Jews. But it by no means conciliated them. From this occurrence began that persecution which never slept until Jesus was taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain.‡ It had now become clear to the religious leaders of the nation that Jesus was not the Messiah whom they desired. His miracles they could not deny; His wisdom and virtue they could not gainsay. But He evidently did not belong to them: He had no sympathy with the popular religion, or with any of its sects. They seem, therefore, about this time, to have determined to put Him out of the way. This, however, they could not effect immediately. They were restrained on the one hand by fear of the Roman authorities, and on the other, by a dread of the multitude, who regarded

* John v. 21-23.

† John v. 25-30.

‡ See Acts ii. 23.

Jesus as a prophet. Their plan was, therefore, to undermine His influence with the people, and to excite the suspicion and jealousy of the Romans against Him. How artfully and perseveringly this malignant scheme was carried out the history of the two years following will fully disclose.

PART V.

The Introductory Ministry
of Jesus in Galilee.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH.

JESUS HEARS OF JOHN'S IMPRISONMENT—HE RETURNS TO GALILEE AND IS PERMITTED TO LABOR FREELY—HE COMES TO NAZARETH—HE ATTENDS THE SYNAGOGUE SERVICE—HE READS THE LESSON FROM THE PROPHETS—JESUS EXPOUNDS THE WORDS OF THE PROPHET—THE INCREDULITY AND SCORN OF THE NAZARENES—JESUS REBUKES THEM SHARPLY—THEIR RAGE—THEY ARE FOILED IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO KILL JESUS—THE NAZARENES GIVEN OVER TO UNBELIEF—THEIR REJECTION OF JESUS ACCOUNTED FOR—GOD, IN HIS WORKS, SIMILARLY UNRECOGNIZED BY MEN—JESUS APPEARED ON EARTH AS A MAN—HIS SINLESSNESS A FACT NOT READILY APPRECIABLE BY MEN—HE CONTINUED SO LONG IN OBSCURITY—THE FAMILIAR ACQUAINTANCE OF THE NAZARENES WITH JESUS, A HINDRANCE TO THEIR HIGHER KNOWLEDGE OF HIM.

SOON after the events narrated in the preceding chapter, and while He was engaged in the further prosecution of His labors, our Lord received the painful, and yet not unexpected tidings, that John the Baptist had been thrown into prison.* The stern and uncompromising character of John, his evident lack of sympathy with the ruling classes among the Jews, his unsparing rebukes of the wickedness of the age, and his open and positive endorsement of Jesus as the Messiah, had, at length, aroused against him a hostility which could not be appeased short of his life. Knowing as He did the secret hatred and the diabolical plans of the Jews; and conscious that the news of John's imprisonment would embolden them to attempt putting an end to His labors by a like violence, our Lord withdrew from

* See Matthew iv. 12.

Jerusalem, and returned to Galilee. Here, favorably received by the people, who appear not yet to have been infected by the animosity of the Jews at Jerusalem, He engaged in teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. That He was permitted to do so freely, was not strange. The synagogue worship was distinguished for its freedom. The right of teaching was not restricted to any class. After the reading of the Scriptures, in the synagogue service, any respectable person was permitted to speak. Then, too, the hostile policy of the Jewish leaders had not yet developed itself openly, so as to attract the attention, or excite the passions of the people.

On one of His missionary tours, Jesus came to Nazareth, the city where He had been brought up. He seems to have arrived several days previous to the Sabbath, during which time He healed a few sick people and preached to His former neighbors as He had opportunity. Some reports of His miracles at Jerusalem, and perhaps of the healing of the nobleman's son, must have reached them, yet His coming seems to have created no extraordinary sensation, though many, doubtless, felt a vague curiosity to see and hear the youthful artisan whose name already resounded through the land.

When the Sabbath was come, Jesus, according to His custom from childhood, went into the synagogue to unite in the public worship of God. The people had been accustomed to see Him there in company with His mother and other relatives, not as a teacher, but as a quiet worshiper. He had come and gone, just like any other pious mechanic. They had not noticed anything extraordinary in Him. They had seen nothing to censure; and, on the other hand, there had been little to attract attention.

On this occasion, when opportunity was given, probably after the reading of the prescribed section of the law,

Jesus stood up as a signal,—doubtless in accordance with the usage of the synagogue,—that he would read the lesson from the prophets. The servant of the synagogue handed Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the volume till He came to what we call the sixty-first chapter, He read the first verse and a part of the second. The passage is translated by Luke into Greek very freely, giving the full sense of the Hebrew original, without rendering word for word, as in our English version: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor: He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year to the Lord.”*

What a full, glowing description of the Messiah and His work! Anointed from above with the Spirit, when the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost, in the likeness of a dove, descended and abode upon Him, He was commissioned to proclaim glad tidings to the miserable and perishing; to the sorrowful and poor in spirit; to heal the hearts that were contrite and penitent; to announce liberty to all in bondage, and deliverance to all who were bruised by any kind of oppression; in a word, to publish the great, the beautiful year of jubilee, the year of redemption and freedom for mankind,—such was the Messiah’s work as foreshown by the evangelical prophet.

Having read these words, Jesus rolled up the volume, gave it to the servant of the synagogue, and sat down. Something in His appearance, and in the reading, combined with a curiosity previously excited, concentrated upon Him the attention of the whole congregation. He at once began to discourse to them on the Scripture just

* Isaiah lxi. 1, 2.

read, showing its fulfillment then and there, with such power and wisdom, such majesty and sweetness, that all His hearers were filled with wonder and admiration. The expression of the evangelist,—“the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth,” is descriptive, more in the Greek than in the English, of a certain charm of elocution which distinguished this, and, doubtless, all other discourses of our Lord. In His teaching, matter and manner were exquisitely suited to each other; great and beautiful and divine thoughts were clothed in fitting words, and uttered with a voice of thrilling power and sweetness. Every word came forth from those holy lips full of life and music; for the fulness of the godhead dwelt in Him bodily.

The hearers were at first captivated. Their prejudices were for a moment almost overcome, and they listened with unaffected delight to their youthful neighbor. They marveled, but did not believe; for after a little while there was a reaction of the vulgar jealousy and spite which had for a few moments been charmed away, and they began to say, one to another: “Whence hath *this man* this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us?”* “This young man,” say they, “this Jesus, the carpenter, who has lived among us from his childhood, who has made our ploughs and yokes, and repaired our houses, whom we have so often seen in our streets with saw and hammer, is giving Himself strange airs. He sets himself up for our teacher and prophet. We never saw anything wonderful in Him. We have always known Him as a poor artisan. And then, there is nothing in His family to warrant this assumption of su-

* Matthew xiii. 54–56.

periority. We can count up His brothers and sisters on our fingers; and as for His mother, we know her well; her name is Mary. Now, all at once, He has become a rabbi, and is followed by disciples. They talk about His *miracles*; *we* never saw any; let Him work miracles here and now." And so the people were offended in Him. It does not appear that any believed in Him. Nay, His own brothers,—so they were called, according to Jewish custom, though they were probably but cousins,*—did not become His disciples till a much later period; and it would seem, that on one or two occasions afterwards, they opposed Him.

When our Lord perceived the altered tone of feeling in the assembly, He said to them: "Ye will surely say unto me this proverb: Physician heal thyself; whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country." They were greedy for *signs*; they were incredulous and contemptuous; they regarded it as absurd that One whom they had known so long, and as they thought, so well, should have suddenly become a great prophet and miracle-worker. Should the carpenter's son teach them? Let Him teach Himself first. Let Him not assume to know so much more and be so much better than His neighbors. At least, let Him give us a sign; let Him do such miracles here as rumor says He has done in Capernaum. "Let Him heal Himself in the persons of His own countrymen here at home, if He would have them do Him homage. Let Him free Himself from the meanness of His own family relationships, if He would have us regard Him as the Saviour of the nation."†

But Jesus could not gratify their appetite for marvels without violating a fundamental principle of His ministry;

* This, as the more probable view, is here adopted. A discussion of the question involved would be foreign to the design of this book.

† Lange's "Life of Christ," vol. 2, page 360.

and, therefore, He rebukes them sharply for their unbelief, and points out its cause. He shows them that there is nothing surprising in His being rejected by His own townsmen, because no prophet is honored in his own country, and among his own kindred. The greatest prophets of old had been rejected by their own countrymen. In the great famine in the time of Elijah, among all the widows in Israel, none had been miraculously relieved except a woman in Sarepta, a Gentile city. And in the days of Elisha, not a leper was healed in Israel except Naaman, the Syrian.*

This discourse, so direct, pointed and severe, enraged the people of Nazareth. Was Jesus, then, a great prophet like Elijah and Elisha? Were they spiritually blind and incorrigible, like those idolators of old, and therefore to be passed by in the gracious visitations of God. They would not bear the arrogance of this insolent upstart; and so they rose up in wrath, and, casting Him out of the synagogue,—which was excommunication,—they thrust Him out of the city—which was outlawry,—and hurried Him to a precipice near the city, and were about to take His life by casting Him down headlong. But now, just as the powers of darkness seemed about to triumph in the certain destruction of the divine preacher, they were unexpectedly foiled and covered with confusion; His adversaries were suddenly smitten with supernatural terror, and deprived of all power to execute their murderous purpose. They seem to have been unnerved and paralyzed, by a momentary outflashing of that divine majesty which was hidden, not extinguished, by the veil of our Lord's humanity.

“ They, astonished, all resistance lost,
All courage ;’

* See Luke iv. 24–27.

and Jesus, passing through the midst of them, went His way. This was, with one probable exception,* the last visit which Jesus made to that hardened and guilty city. For well nigh thirty years, the Son of God had dwelt among them unrecognized; and now they drove Him away with violence and outrage. Henceforth, they seem to have been given over to hopeless unbelief. O ye unhappy people of Nazareth, why did ye not know the day of your gracious visitation?

To some, who judge with eyes of sense, this narrative will seem involved in grave difficulties. They will regard it as unaccountable, or as even incredible, that the Lord of glory should have lived so many years among men, and have been all the while overlooked and unknown by His daily associates, even by His familiar friends and kinsfolk. There must have been—so they reason—something so extraordinary, so unearthly, in the person and bearing of the God-man,—there must have been such wisdom, purity and majesty apparent in all His words and actions, as to inspire all who saw Him with reverence and awe. It will perhaps seem to such persons a suspicious circumstance that the near neighbors, the very relations of Jesus, did not believe in Him.

It is indeed a very startling fact, though for other reasons than those just mentioned, that the people of Nazareth, even those who knew our Lord best,—His blessed mother always excepted—never during so many years suspected that He was a divine person, nor even a prophet, but always looked upon Him as a common man. Let it be noted, also, that this fact,—according to human judgment so discreditable to our divine Master,—is either carefully recorded, or plainly alluded to by *all* the evangelists. How, then shall we account for both these facts?

* See Matthew xiii. 54–58. Mark vi. 1–6.

As to the latter, the evangelists might easily have suppressed the fact. Impostors would have done so. But they were not impostors. They were thoroughly honest and impartial. This very narrative is the best proof possible of their simple, straightforward veracity.

As to the fact itself, it becomes perfectly clear in the light which the Scriptures themselves cast upon it. It ought not to strike us as strange or unaccountable, that the Son of God lived so long at Nazareth unrecognized; for the Nazarenes were *men*; and men had been, for four thousand years, blind to divine manifestations. How could those who had not before known God, recognize Him as manifest in the flesh. From the beginning, God left not Himself without witness on earth; for the Word,—the same Word who dwelt personally in Christ,—“was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” He had by His Spirit garnished the heavens, kindled the stars, ensphered the earth in air, balanced the clouds, bound the seas as with chains, ribbed the land and propped the heavens with everlasting mountains, clothed the hills with forests, and the valleys with cornfields, and filled air, earth, and ocean with joyous life. Above all, He had formed man in His own image, and endowed him with intelligence and free will, and the power to love, and the capacity for religion, and immortality, as well as with outward beauty and majesty. The Word was *in* the world, a ubiquitous Spirit of life, light, law, harmony, goodness—vivifying all, actuating all, governing all; blessing all, but “*the world knew Him not.*” What wonder that when “He came to His own, His own received Him not?”

We are, moreover, not to forget the manner of His appearing among them. He did not embody Himself to their view in a form of terrible glory; He did not speak to them in a voice like the sound of many waters or

mighty thunderings; but He first appeared among them as a little child, helpless and dependent, like other children,—the child of Joseph the carpenter, and Mary. He ate and drank and slept and dwelt in His humble home, like a human creature. He increased in wisdom and stature; grew up from infancy to boyhood, from boyhood to youth, and was all the while subject to His parents. He appeared on earth a true man; He was in all respects made like unto His brethren, *sin only excepted*. And this exception was not one to strike the attention of the multitude. They could indeed have decided that any person guilty of open wickedness was not an apostle and prophet of God; but the mere *absence of sin* in the outward life would scarcely be observed; for many are blameless in their moral conduct who are far from sinless. Holiness is the life of God in the soul, and though fruitful in good works, is hidden from the eyes of the world.

Still further, Jesus continued in a private and obscure condition for thirty years. He wrought no miracles; He did not publicly teach; He was in all things obedient and faithful; but He did not avow His Divine Sonship, nor challenge attention, nor demand homage of those around Him. The feeling of His neighbors towards Him was probably one of profound esteem, unless indeed they thought Him enthusiastic and eccentric. This, however, they could not have done; for His perfectly developed and symmetrical manhood would not have made *such* an impression, even on the most stupid and wrong-minded among them. But while they thus *respected* Jesus as a singularly pure and pious young man, how could they, being evil and ignorant, have discerned in Him the only begotten Son of God?

It sounds like a paradox, but is nevertheless quite true: the people of Nazareth knew not Jesus because they knew Him so well. Why is it, that some of our daily associates,

inmates perhaps of our own homes, have a less vivid impression of our true characters, perhaps even of our physiognomy, than comparative strangers! We say *comparative* strangers, for considerable acquaintance is of course supposed. Those who are with us continually soon become accustomed to our peculiarities of feature, deportment, speech and character, and after awhile, they cease, for that very reason, to notice them. An eccentric man hardly seems eccentric to his wife and children. Those who have been brought up in the midst of grand and beautiful scenery would fail to write as graphic a description of it as a traveler from a distant country. We cease to observe what is familiar. So it was with James and Joses and Judas and Simon, the brothers of our Lord. They had been with Him in the house and the workshop many years. His humility and meekness, His piety and active goodness, were continual and uninterrupted, like the course of nature. They ceased to wonder at His virtues because they were uniform, just as they never wondered at seeing the moon and the stars in the sky, or the sun rise and set. A single wrong action in Jesus would have shocked them like an earthquake; but they no more wondered at the absence of such an action in Him, than that no earthquake disturbed the serene tranquility of the landscape. Had He been in a slight degree imperfect, His transcendent goodness would have been better appreciated. In all these respects, then, the people of Nazareth were like human beings the world over. Reader, they were, perhaps, not unlike you and me.

CHAPTER II.

JESUS ON THE WAY TO CAPERNAUM.

JESUS DEPARTS FOR CAPERNAUM—PRESSED BY THE MULTITUDE ON THE SHORE OF THE LAKE, HE TEACHES THEM FROM A BOAT—HIS DISCOURSE FINISHED, HE DIRECTS HIS DISCIPLES TO LAUNCH FORTH AND CAST THEIR NETS—THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES—PETER'S ASTONISHMENT AND SELF-REPROACHFUL CONFESSION—JESUS QUIETS HIS APPREHENSION—THE TRANSACTION AN ACTED PARABLE—THE EFFECT OF IT ON THE DISCIPLES—REFLECTIONS.

REJECTED at Nazareth, Jesus departs for Capernaum, teaching the people who, attracted by His growing fame, gathered about Him, from the adjacent cities and villages. On one occasion, as He was passing along the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the multitude so pressed upon Him that it became annoying, and even prevented His speaking to them effectively. Seeing an empty boat at hand which belonged to Peter, He entered it, and requested him to thrust out a little from the land. Sitting thus in the boat, at a convenient distance from the crowd, He taught them. The scene is one worthy of a Christian painter. There, in that boat, we see the saintly form of the Divine Teacher; all along the shore, crowding to the water's edge, and leaning forward with fixed gaze and attentive attitude, to hear the words of Him who spake as never man spake, we behold the multitude of long-robed, turbaned, bearded, wild-looking Galileans. They follow His words with breathless interest, now giving utterance to low murmurs of doubt or perplexity, and now breaking out into exclamations of surprise or approval.

When, at length, Jesus had finished His discourse, He directed Peter to launch the boat into deeper water, and let down the nets for a draught. Peter, not in a spirit of unbelief, perhaps, but yet without much faith, replied that they had toiled all night without success; yet, as He had commanded it, they would cast the nets and make another effort. The boat moves off from the shore into the deeper water. Peter is at the helm. He goes mainly out of deference to his Master. As an old fisherman, he knows that appearances do not promise success. Nevertheless, when they reach the proper place they let down the nets, and lo, the multitude of fishes taken is so great that they can not draw them into the boat without help; so they beckon to their partners in the other boat to come to their assistance. When the net is finally drawn in, the haul is found to be prodigious; both boats are loaded to the water's edge: they begin even to sink.

Peter, who,—as well as his partners in the other boat, James and John, the sons of Zebedee,—was all the while stupefied with wonder and astonishment, now remembered his former unbelief and his half-reluctant obedience, and falling upon his knees before Jesus broke out into language of mingled surprise, alarm, and self-reproach: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* This manifestation of the divine power, in the exercise of *his own trade*, was characteristic of divine operations generally in the history of Christianity; he was thus led from the carnal to the spiritual. All his previous impressions were revived and deepened by this sudden exhibition of the power of a word from Christ; and the Saviour appeared so exalted that he felt himself unworthy to be near Him. The divine power appears fearful in its holiness to the sinner who is conscious of his sinfulness; it

* Luke v. 8.

fills him with consternation—he shrinks back with trembling.* To feel himself in the *immediate presence* of a Divine Being, as Christ had just proved Himself to be, caused Peter to cry out, in language like that of the people to Moses, when, at the giving of the law, they removed and stood afar off: “Let not God speak with us, lest we die.”†

In all this, however, Peter was yet in a legal state, under the bondage of fear and trembling in the presence of God. He had not attained to that higher state in which divine manifestations do not terrify, but melt the heart into tenderness and love. Into that higher state Jesus now invites him: “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men;”‡ or, as Matthew has it: “Follow me; and I will make you fishers of men.”§ From this it appears that this entire transaction is to be regarded as an acted parable. Jesus appears as the *Master Fisherman*; Peter and his partners as servants and helpers; unregenerate men as the fish; and the worldly and sinful life the troubled element in which they dwell. These last, it is the great purpose of the gospel ministry to catch, not for death, but life, as indeed the Greek word here used signifies; that is, to raise them from a lower to a higher element; from the foul and earth-laden waters of sin to the pure and heavenly atmosphere breathed by saints and angels, and by God Himself. “I will make you fishers of men;” “Leave these boats and nets; you are chosen to preach my gospel to all the world; and the gospel shall be as the net you have just cast; it shall enclose a great multitude of men; for I, who just now guided the fish into your net by an influence that you

* Neander’s “Life of Christ,” pages 163 and 164.

† Exodus xx. 19.

‡ Luke v. 10.

§ Matthew iv. 19.

could not understand, am able, by a secret operation of grace, to incline the hearts of men to believe the word which you shall preach. Therefore, fear not; for by my assistance you shall be more successful in your new and heavenly calling than you have just now been by the same assistance in your secular trade."

That this was the real purport of the whole transaction; and that it was so understood by the disciples, Simon and Andrew, is evident from the effect which it produced upon them. At the call of Jesus, they immediately left their boats, their nets, their little *all*, and from that moment followed Jesus constantly, and with almost unswerving faith and fidelity. A similar effect was produced upon James and John, who were at a little distance in a ship, mending their nets, and to whom Jesus, just after, extended the same call, "They immediately left the ship, and their father, and followed Him."*

Now, it can not but be seen that there is something most wonderful in all this. Suppose that some far-seeing prophet had been standing on the shore of Gennesaret, an eye-witness of these transactions, and in company with an Athenian philosopher. Turning to the philosopher, the seer calls his attention to the boat in which Jesus sits, with Peter, eager, earnest, watchful, at his side. "See you that young man," says he, "clad in coarse garments, but so meek and tranquil in countenance, on whose words His companion hangs with such strange reverence, with such mingled wonder and delight? A few months ago He was a carpenter in a village a few miles beyond those hills: a few years hence, He will be revered as a Divine Teacher, and worshiped as the incarnate God, by nations that never heard of Socrates and Plato, of Zeno and Epicurus. A religion called by His name will extend its influence over

* Matthew iv. 22.

the whole world ; its holy worship, its solemn rites and ceremonies, will be celebrated in gorgeous temples, when the crumbling structures of your own Acropolis shall be looked upon with mingled regret and abhorrence, as the beautiful relics of an unholty superstition. And the fisherman who sits in the same boat, and who lives yonder in Capernaum, will hereafter preach the doctrines of this Nazarene artisan to thousands upon thousands of eager disciples, in Jerusalem, in Babylon and in imperial Rome. One of those young men in the other boat,—the son of that old gray-bearded fisherman yonder,—will write books in your own Greek tongue,—albeit not in classic style,—which will be earnestly studied by millions of devout readers, thousands of years after he is dead ; and which, translated into other tongues, shall exercise a living and powerful influence on the civilized world, when the boasted productions of your poets, historians and philosophers shall be looked upon as dead classics, and be confined to the schools of the learned. The time will come when the name of this carpenter, and of these fishermen, will have more authority in Rome itself than that of emperor or god. A long succession of mighty potentates will wage implacable war with the religion now being founded by this obscure Galilean ; but the might of legions and the arts of statesmen shall prove powerless to impede its progress ; and a few generations hence, the throne of the Cæsars will be filled by a disciple of this same Jesus, the Son of Mary. Even the name of Simon Peter, the fisherman of Galilee, will be more potent and venerable in Rome than that of any sage, orator, consul or emperor known in her whole proud annals.” What, think you, would have been the emotions of the philosopher as he listened to a prophecy like this ? He would have treated it with silent contempt : his proud lip would have curled with a sneer ; not a word would he have deigned to utter in reply. His inner *thought* would have been,

“what fanatics, what fools these Jews are?” and, so he would have turned away, not knowing that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence.”*

* 1 Corinthians i. 27-29.

CHAPTER III.

JESUS AT CAPERNAUM.

JESUS GOES TO CAPERNAUM—HIS FAVORABLE RECEPTION—EFFECT OF HIS TEACHING—THE DEMONIAK—EXTENT AND TERRIBLE EFFECTS OF DEMONIAKAL POSSESSION—THE DEMON RECOGNIZES THE SON OF GOD—JESUS REBUKES HIM AND CASTS HIM OUT—THE AMAZEMENT OF THE PEOPLE—JESUS HEALS PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER—THE EXCITEMENT PRODUCED BY THESE MIRACLES—PICTURES ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE PREVALENT FEELING—THE VIEW GIVEN BY THESE EVENTS OF CHRIST'S ACTIVITY—THE RELATION OF HIS EXERCISE OF THE GIFT OF HEALING, TO HIS MISSION.

TEACHING by the way, as has been narrated in the previous chapter, our Lord at length arrived at Capernaum, to which place His mother and His brethren seem not long afterwards to have followed Him. Indeed, this favored city became the place of His residence during the remainder of His Galilean ministry. In this region and at this time Jesus encountered little or no opposition. The healing of the nobleman's son was doubtless well-known to the people, and the report of our Lord's proceedings while on the way from Nazareth had probably reached them in advance, and prepared them to give Him a favorable reception. Hence, He was everywhere received with enthusiasm. Wherever He went, the people were drawn to Him, and hung upon His lips with wonder and delight. His striking presence and peculiar manner made this less strange. Never had such words before been heard,—words full of love and life and joy,—for, in truth, He was the word made flesh, and all His utterances were divinely

true and beautiful. His hearers could not but mark the contrast between His teachings and those of their scribes, who rehearsed only the scholastic and traditional glosses on the law and the prophets; whereas He spoke with authority as a lawgiver, and with infallible assurance as a true and faithful witness, declaring what He knew and testifying what He had seen. All who were not blinded by prejudice were charmed by that blended majesty and meekness of wisdom, that conjunction of divine purity and tender compassion, which were disclosed in all His sayings.

Soon after Jesus came to Capernaum, we find Him in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. There happened to be in the congregation a man who was suffering from a mysterious and terrible disease. He was a demoniac;—that is to say, he was possessed by an evil spirit, who had obtained the mastery over his soul and body, and had indeed come into so intimate a relation with him, that the miserable wretch seemed to himself to have a double personality. His sufferings were horrible beyond description. Epilepsy, insanity, convulsions, deafness and many other ailments, were the ordinary effects of this visitation. This unhappy man was but one of a great multitude, in that age, who were similarly afflicted. The fallen spirits seem to have had extraordinary power over that generation. Yearning,—as perhaps all evil spirits do,*—after a corporeal and sensuous life, they had found means to cross the gulf which separates the world of spirits from the world of sense; and had gained possession of innumerable men and women, and even children, whom they found physically and morally susceptible to their influence.

* See Isaac Taylor's "Physical Theory of another Life." It is many years since I read that remarkable book. Its republication is a desideratum of the present time.

The subjects of this influence became objects of terror and loathing to themselves and their friends ; and many of them fled from their homes and wandered naked in the deserts, and among the tombs. They were the terror of travelers. None could hear their despairing cries without shuddering. The malady was then among the Jews as it is not unlikely to become in our own day, a stern and dreadful reality, more to be feared than any natural disease or epidemic, like plague or Asiatic cholera.

Such was the disease of the demoniac in the synagogue. The demon was conscious of a divine and holy presence in the assembly ; he felt the approach of a heavenly power by which he was judged and punished ; he knew the seed of the woman,—the Serpent-bruise—the Son of God,—and cried out, using the organs of his victim : “ Let us alone ! What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth ; art Thou come to destroy us ? I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God.”* Thus the powers of hell recognize their Judge and Destroyer ; thus they recoil from their doom. They are unwilling to relinquish their prey, hence the outcry. The purpose of the demon in this case was to bring suspicion on Jesus, and to precipitate the great conflict by a premature disclosure of His divine character. But Jesus, who would not receive testimony from Satan, said to the demon : “ Hold thy peace and come out of him.”† The evil spirit knew the voice of power ; he could not resist it, and so, enraged and despairing, he threw the man on the ground, racked him with convulsions, forced from him fearful inarticulate cries, and came out of him. The sufferer was now healed in body and soul.

Great was the amazement of the people who had witnessed this conflict and victory. This seems to have

* Luke iv. 34.

† Luke iv. 35.

been the first cure of the kind that Jesus wrought, and they therefore crowded together, and exclaimed with one voice: "What a word is this? for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits and they come out."* Yes, ye people of Capernaum, it is a word of power! It sounds through all the regions of hell; and the grisly principalities and powers tremble and cry out under this first stroke of that iron rod which shall dash them to shivers like a potter's vessel!

After the synagogue service, Jesus, accompanied by James and John, went to the house of Simon Peter and Andrew, who were citizens of Capernaum. Finding Peter's mother-in-law sick of a violent fever, He stood over her, and uttered the menacing yet healing word, which thrilled through her life as if He was rebuking an evil spirit in the disease. Then taking her by the hand, He lifted her up, and the fever instantaneously left her. Conscious of the cure, and full of gratitude, she prepared a festive entertainment for her Holy Guest. By this time, the humble dwelling of Peter had become the centre of interest for all Capernaum. The talk in every house was of the wonderful cure of the nobleman's son a few days before, of the demoniac in the synagogue, and concerning the mighty words of Jesus and the meek majesty of His presence. Hope is stealing into many a sick room, and mantling with a flush of joy the pallid face of many an invalid. Reader, let us in imagination, pass through the city during these closing hours of the Sabbath, and note the feeling awakened among the people, by the presence of the Divine Healer. In one house lies a wasted, dying girl. Hearing of the cures wrought by the new Prophet, she beckons her mother to her couch, and with one hand stilling her throbbing heart, with the other so thin and

* Luke iv. 36.

white, she draws down her mother's head and whispers, "Do you not think that Jesus can cure *me*? I wish you would have me carried to the house of Simon. They say Jesus is gentle and kind; surely He would lay His hand on me and heal me." In another house the husband comes to his bed-ridden wife, who has been long chained down by paralysis, kisses her pale cheek and says, "My poor wife, this morning I saw Jesus of Nazareth heal a poor demoniac in the synagogue, and since the service He has cured Simon's mother-in-law of a raging fever. I have faith that He can cure you. If you are willing, I will take you in my arms this evening and carry you to Simon's house." She assents, while a tear steals down her cheek. In still another house, the father and mother whisper sadly together about their son, who is a raving maniac, even now shrieking and tearing himself in the next room; and they determine when the sun sets to carry him to Jesus. And then, there is the blind boy whom every body loves and pities, and the lame beggar who crawls about on crutches, and the leper who dwells apart, and many others, scattered through the city, all beginning to wonder whether Jesus can not heal them. Capernaum is indeed wrought up to a pitch of extraordinary excitement. Many hearts are throbbing with mingled hope and fear. At last the sun sets, and the Sabbath is ended. And, behold, the streets are full of people,—men, women and children, old and young, many borne on couches and in the arms of their friends, all flowing in an unbroken stream to the humble dwelling of Simon the fisherman. The door stands wide open: they press into the presence of the Great Physician; *He lays His hands on every one of them, and heals them all.* It is probable that until a late hour of the night, the people continued to press into the presence of Jesus and were healed by Him.

“What an insight does the account of this day, so marked by deeds of love and mercy, give us into the nature of our Lord’s ministry in Galilee! What holy activities, what ceaseless acts of mercies! Such a picture does it give us of their actual nature and amount, that we may well conceive that the single day, with all its quickly succeeding events, has been thus minutely portrayed to show us what our Redeemer’s ministerial life really was, and to justify, if need be, the noble hyperbole of the beloved Apostle, that if the things which Jesus did should be written, every one, *the world itself* could not contain the books that should be written.”*

As our history advances Jesus comes more and more into view as *the Healer of diseases*. A large portion of His time seems to have been taken up in relieving the bodily wants and maladies of men. This may at first strike us as surprising; but a little reflection will convince us that it fell in with the great purpose of His mission. He came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, to overthrow the kingdom of evil. The Scriptures teach us that all the physical sicknesses and sufferings of mankind, and death itself, spring from the moral corruption of human nature—from the sinful life of the race; in other words, that they have their root in original sin, which implies an influx, according to a natural, hereditary susceptibility, of satanic evil and misery into every individual of the human family. “The world lieth in the Wicked One.”† All disease comes from sin; not, indeed, in all cases from the actual transgressions of the individuals afflicted; nevertheless, from *sin*. Natural evil is moral evil passed over from the spiritual world to the material; it is sin overflowing the soul and working destruction in the body; it is the outermost blossoming,

* Ellicott’s “Life of Christ,” page 160.

† See 1 John v. 19.

or rather the ripening fruit of that great tree of hereditary depravity which strikes its roots into the burning marl of hell. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."*

Now as the sin of the first Adam was the beginning of disease and mortality in the world, it was fitting that the second Adam should be a fountain of health and life. And such was Jesus. His very body was a reservoir of healing virtue. To touch His flesh was to be made whole; for He gave *His flesh for the life of the world*. This is what we should have expected in a Redeemer who came to abolish death and destroy him that hath the power of death; that is, the devil. Jesus, as the Son of man, had the deepest sympathy with men in their sufferings. Whatever hurt humanity in any of its members, wounded Him. Milton, in a terribly realistic passage of the *Paradise Lost*, represents Adam as beholding and lamenting, in a vision, the diseases and sufferings of his posterity:—

"Immediately a place
Before his eyes appeared, sad, noisome, dark;
A lazar-house it seemed, wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseased; all maladies
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies and asthmas and joint-racking rheums;
Dire was the tossing; deep the groans; despair
Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch.
Sight so deformed what heart of rock could long
Dry-eyed behold? Adam could not, but wept,
Though not of woman born."†

* James i. 15.

† *Paradise Lost*, book xi. line 467.

Now all this burden of human infirmities and sicknesses, Jesus bore through *sympathy* with His brethren—a sympathy which prompted and qualified Him to be the GREAT PHYSICIAN. Further, it was by these miracles of healing that our Lord largely carried on His great work of saving men from their sins. The cures which He wrought generally, if not universally, extended to the *souls* of men; He healed the whole man. The healing was, in fact, but part of that full salvation which He came to bestow. We cannot imagine that any of those who were healed by Christ rejected Him as their Saviour; and we know that many of them became His devoted and faithful followers. Such a demonstration of His love to *them*, and of His supernatural power, could not but win their lasting gratitude and obedience.

Christ's miracles of healing were also essential to His self-revelation, as the incarnate Word, in whom was the life of men. Every cure was in itself a demonstration of the highest spiritual truth, that in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. His works were not only attestations of His authority as a teacher, but they were essential parts of His teaching. The life which went forth from Him as the Healer, was the light of men.

CHAPTER IV.

JESUS HEALING THE LEPER.

JESUS AT EARLY DAWN WITHDRAWS INTO A SOLITARY PLACE TO PRAY—THE MULTITUDE SEEK HIM—HE REFUSES TO TARRY AT CAPERNAUM, AND ENTERS ON HIS FIRST MISSIONARY CIRCUIT—SCANTINESS OF THE SACRED NARRATIVE AS TO HIS LABORS—THE LEPROUS MAN—HE COMES TO JESUS AND PRAYS TO BE HEALED—JESUS HEALS HIM—WHY JESUS TOUCHED HIM—WHY JESUS CHARGED HIM TO TELL NO MAN—THE LEPER SPREADS THE NEWS ABROAD—THE MIRACLE INDICATIVE OF CHRIST'S SELF-CONSCIOUS MASTERY OVER DISEASE—SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MIRACLE.

SHORT were the slumbers of Jesus, after the labors of the preceding day. Long before dawn He silently left His bed, and went to a solitary, desert place, probably on a neighboring mountain, "and there prayed." Though He was the Son of God, He felt the need of frequent seclusion, even from the society of friends and disciples, to refresh His soul and recruit His physical vigor in uninterrupted communion with the Father. While He was thus engaged in solitary devotion, the multitude again thronged to Peter's house; but not finding Him whom they sought, Peter, already as it would seem familiar with his Master's habits, and not doubting whither and for what purpose He had gone, led the way to the place of His retirement. Fearing that He was about to leave them, they earnestly entreated Him to remain in Capernaum. Deeming it wise, however, to let the popular excitement subside till calm reflection should prepare the way for that divine doctrine which He longed to impart,

our Lord declared that His mission required Him to preach the kingdom of God to other cities and villages. So, without returning to Capernaum, He entered on what has been called *His first missionary circuit*. •

As this journey occurred before the calling of Matthew, and, possibly, before Peter and John entered into active service, it is not strange that the accounts given of it by the evangelists are exceedingly brief and general. Indeed, of its details, with the exception of one incident, we really know nothing. It would appear, however, that our Lord went from village to village of that densely peopled region, everywhere teaching in the synagogues and working miracles. Every day probably resembled, in its beneficent activities, that memorable Sabbath in Capernaum. The people welcomed Him with enthusiasm; nay, many flocked to Him from distant places, even from Judea and Perea. A single miracle, which *probably* belongs to this journey,* is narrated by the evangelists:

While Jesus was passing through a certain city,—the multitude not being at the time with Him,—there came to Him a man, as Luke the physician states, “full of leprosy.” His skin cracked and peeled and disclosing the raw flesh beneath; his body covered with ulcerous tumors; his joints stiff and swollen; his eye-balls red and fixed in their sockets; his breath fetid and his voice husky like that of a dog hoarse with long barking;—all these symptoms probably marked him as the victim of an extreme form of that terrible disease. Living corpse as he was, his mental sufferings must have been of an aggravated kind. Excluded from the congregation as unclean; avoided with horror by those who had been his dearest friends; compelled to warn off all those who approached him, by crying with

* See Andrews' "Life of Christ," pages 223 and 224; see, also, Robinson's "Harmony," page 24.

hoarse and hollow voice, "unclean, unclean;" he had wandered about the outskirts of the city, with rent garments, head bare and lips covered, a helpless, hopeless outcast, until life had become a burden and a loathing. At length, however, a faint hope dawned upon his weary and despairing spirit. He had heard of the gracious miracles wrought by Jesus. Perhaps he had witnessed some of them. He may have hung around the outskirts of the multitude, on several occasions, when Jesus was healing the sick. The question had occurred to him: "Why can not this Great Physician heal me?" The thought took such hold upon him that he watched for an opportunity when, the multitude being absent, he might venture into the presence of Jesus.

And now the time has come, and with eager, trembling haste, lest the approach of some one should compel him to withdraw, he comes to Jesus, and falling prostrate before Him, with upturned, imploring eye, he murmurs in hoarse, broken accents: "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean."* Never was prayer more artless, direct, eloquent; never did any prayer breathe a truer faith or a deeper pathos. What wonder that Jesus was touched with compassion; that He felt drawn towards the outcast from whom all men shrank with horror, and that putting forth His hand and touching him, He gave an answer, patterned after the sufferer's prayer: "I will; be thou clean."† By that touch, healing virtue was imparted; for immediately the leprosy departed from him. His loathsome, putrefying skin became like the skin of a little child; his blood, so lately creeping sluggishly through his veins a polluted and poisonous stream, now courses joyously and full of life through his body; the leper *feels* that he is healed. What wonder that, though Jesus charged him to tell no

* Luke v. 12.

† Luke v. 13.

man, he could not restrain his joy; that he could not keep to himself the wonderful cure which had been wrought in him!

It will be noticed that Jesus, in violation of the ceremonial law, touched the leper.* This was through no forgetfulness of the prohibition. That was doubtless designed to prevent a ceremonial defilement, and, possibly, communication of the disease to others. No such precaution was necessary in the case of Jesus. That life-giving hand could contract no defilement, no disease. Besides, Jesus was Lord of symbols and ceremonies; as He was Lord of the Sabbath. In the prosecution of this work as Redeemer, He would be bound by no positive commands which He came both to fulfill and abrogate.

Why Jesus charged the leper to tell no man, is a question which has elicited from commentators many ingenious conjectures, the most probable of which is that suggested by Grotius and Bengel, and endorsed by Trench.† "*See thou tell no man* till thou hast shown thyself to the priests; lest if a rumor of these things go before thee, the priests at Jerusalem, out of envy, out of a desire to depreciate my work, may deny either that thou wast before a leper, or else that thou art now truly cleansed." The striking remark of Lange is also worth quoting: "The man should, in the first instance, say nothing of the touching which had taken place, because by that he would expose the Lord to the necessity of undergoing a Levitical quarantine for the sake of the more timid among the people. But he might with prudence let the priests know that he had been healed miraculously by Jesus after the healing had been certified to them by the official declaration and the acceptance of the offering; so that he could bring forth *a testimony unto them*, be-

* Leviticus xiii. 46.

† Trench on Miracles, page 180.

cause otherwise, in consequence of their former ill-feeling toward Jesus, they might have been inclined to question the reality of the cure. So the leper should provide himself with that attestation before he told of the miraculous aid of our Lord.”*

Aside from all this, it is not improbable that other considerations had weight with Jesus. It was not in accordance with the divine humility of His nature, either to court or to countenance the vulgar popularity which was likely to arise from the noisy proclamation of His mighty works. Besides this, He would, doubtless, set an example for His disciples, especially for His ministers in all ages, to whose piety and real usefulness all such popularity must prove a fatal snare. It is not unlikely also, that He regarded it as important to the spiritual welfare of the man who was healed, that, instead of dissipating his religious feelings by empty talk, he should ponder the deep significance of the miracle in silence, and in thankful communing with the Father of all mercies, who had thus given him life from the dead. Having thus charged the now cleansed leper, Jesus forthwith sent him away. But the man found his joy too great to be smothered in silence; and in mere grateful and loving loquacity,—it would seem,—he blazed the matter abroad, till the excitement of the people ran so high, and the concourse of the multitude became so great, that Jesus was compelled to retire into the wilderness WHERE HE PRAYED. This brief narrative therefore opens and closes with a view of Jesus praying in the wilderness.

This miracle is in two aspects highly suggestive. We note the conscious mastery over all the powers of life expressed in the words of Christ; “I will; be thou clean.” The word followed swift as lightning on the prayer,

* Lange’s “Life of Christ.”

sovereign, mighty, decisive. It was an instantaneous out-flash of a will conscious of unlimited energy. There is no reflection, no hesitation, no preparation; but all the confidence of power that never distrusts itself. Was not this the Son of God? Again, in all its deep-seated and incurable loathsomeness, the leprosy was eminently a vivid type of sin. Like that, it is in the nature of sin to poison the very fountain of life in both body and soul, and to work through every fiber of the being a most revolting corruption, from which holy beings can not but shrink with horror, and which must exclude its victim forever from the society of those yet uncontaminated. And neither in the sinner himself, nor in human pity and power, is there any alleviation or cure. Only in Jesus is there help or hope for the leprous soul. To Him the sinner must come; to Him, even in his utter helplessness and despair he may come; with only the pitiable appeal of his misery, and the simple prayer: "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean," he shall not in vain approach the Divine Physician; his cure is certain; the life-giving word will be spoken,—“I will; be thou clean.”

CHAPTER V.

JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC AT CAPERNAUM.

JESUS AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM, SURROUNDED BY THE MULTITUDE—A PARALYTIC IS BROUGHT TO HIM—JESUS DECLARES HIS SINS FORGIVEN—THE PHARISEES SECRETLY CENSURE IT AS BLASPHEMY—READING THEIR HEARTS, JESUS REBUKES THEM AND HEALS THE SICK MAN—THE EFFECT ON THE PEOPLE—THE PARALYTIC A REPRESENTATIVE OF MAN AS SINFUL AND SUFFERING—THE DEEP-SEATED AND INERADICABLE EVIL OF SIN—EXPIATION AND FORGIVENESS NOWHERE IN NATURE OR HUMANITY—BOTH FOUND IN JESUS—THE PROBLEM HOW TO GAIN ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS—EXTERNAL ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PLACABILITY—INTERNAL ASSURANCE—KNOWN BY ITS EFFECTS—ASSURANCE NOT ALWAYS EQUALLY CLEAR.

AFTER having spent some portion of the summer,—how much is not indicated by the evangelists,—in this His first missionary circuit, our Lord returned to Capernaum. His return excited universal interest and enthusiasm, and a multitude gathered about Him,—some of them persons afflicted with disease, who came to be healed by Him;—others scribes, Pharisees, and doctors of the law, drawn not only from different parts of Galilee, but from Judea and Jerusalem itself, who had gathered together at the house where He lodged, to listen to His teachings and to learn His peculiar views and projects.

The friends of a certain paralytic, hearing that Jesus was in the city, and remembering the wonderful miracles of healing which He had wrought there not long before, resolved to carry the sufferer on his bed to the Great Physician. Approaching the house, they found it so thronged with people, within and without, that it was impossible to

enter. Not to be thwarted in their charitable purpose, they ascended to the flat roof of the house, and, removing some of the tiles, made an opening large enough to let down the couch into the room where Jesus sat.

Our Lord was struck with the evident faith of the friends of the paralytic, and with the appearance of the sick man himself. From the peculiar language which He subsequently used, it would seem that He sympathized with him, not only as afflicted with a painful bodily disease, but also as burdened with a sense of *sin*, the root of this and all other maladies. Perhaps the disease had come upon him in consequence of some particular vice: if not, it was certainly,—by a connection more or less remote,—the fruit of moral depravity. Of one or the other, the man was painfully conscious; and hence he came to Jesus, full of sorrow on account of sin, yearning less for bodily than spiritual healing. His inmost want,—and this Jesus knew full well,—was *forgiveness*.

Coming thus into His presence, it is impossible for words to express the deep and tender interest which filled the heart of Jesus in his behalf, and the look of compassionate love which beamed upon His countenance. The poor paralytic uttered not a word, breathed not a syllable of a prayer,—perhaps he was not able to do so,—but to Jesus his dumb misery and sorrow were more eloquent than any words. Jesus at once tenderly addressed him, mainly regardful, however, of the hidden and deeper sorrow of his heart:—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." * Happy sufferer! would that we had been in thy place; that those peace-giving words could have been spoken to us!

This declaration, sweeter to the sick man than heavenly harpings, fell gratefully on the ears of the unbelieving

* Matthew ix. 1.

Pharisees. "Why," said they to themselves, "doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?"* They had a true insight into the nature of forgiveness; they knew that to forgive sins, was an incommunicable prerogative of God; they knew that for a creature to snatch at this prerogative, was aggravated blasphemy; and regarding Jesus as a mere creature, they could not but think Him a blasphemer. They kept their thoughts, however, locked within their own breasts. Jesus, knowing in His spirit that they reasoned thus in their hearts, proceeded to give them a visible demonstration of His power to forgive sins. Assuming that they, with all their unbelief, would recognize a necessary relation between His sovereign power over the effect and His assumed prerogative over the cause, He said to them; "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house."† And the command penetrated to the very seat of life in the sick man's nature; his will, spiritually renovated, regained the mastery over the nerves and muscles of his palsied frame, and he at once arose, took up his couch and went to his house.

The hour was not only a happy one for the suffering paralytic, but it was a glorious one for Jesus. Not only had He evinced His power to relieve the physical sufferings of mankind, but He had conclusively demonstrated His divine right to relieve them from their spiritual distresses; to forgive their sins, and to take away the burden of sin from their heart. This He had done with such unmistakable authority and power that it carried conviction to the hearts of the people; for "They were all

* Mark ii. 7.

† Matthew ix. 5, 6.

amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." *

The paralytic may stand as a representative of both fallen and redeemed humanity; and the story of his cure, (thanks to the Holy Comforter for inditing it!) may teach us most interesting and important lessons. He was diseased in body and soul; a sinner and a sufferer; equally miserable and helpless. He had a polluted soul imprisoned in a diseased and suffering body: thus his two-fold nature was under the empire of evil, and he had no power to redeem himself. In these respects he was a type of humanity at large.

Then, too, though not a word is recorded touching his former history, and though he himself gives no voice to the workings of his heart, we know,—for he was himself a fragment of humanity,—one of us,—that down deep in the center of his soul there was an agonizing consciousness of sin, of moral disorder, of thralldom, of condemnation; and there was, amidst all the seeming hopelessness of his condition, an unutterable yearning for redemption. O thou poor paralytic brother, though no word of thine has been borne to our ears across the gulf of centuries, in the silence of our own souls we hear thy dumb wailings and entreaties, for they are the still, sad voice of humanity itself, in myriads of individual souls, agonizing for pardon and peace.

With this deep consciousness of sin and suffering, who does not feel that with respect to redemption, he, too, is a helpless paralytic? Alas, the disease of sin is deep-seated and defies all remedies of human devising. It strikes its roots down into our very nature; it thrusts itself with its poisonous growth into the will and the affections; its tendrils take fast hold upon our physical being, twine around

* Mark ii. 12.

our habits,—those deep foundation-stones of character,—and intertwist themselves with all the fibers of our immortality. We can not escape our sins; we can not conquer them; we can not even forget them; they are ever rising to our view, like the ghosts of the murdered; they shake their gory locks at us; they point with skeleton fingers to our coming doom. Oh sin, sin! it fills all pillows with thorns, and pierces every heart with many sorrows.

Yet with all this consciousness of sin, when the stricken sinner appeals to nature, to earth, to heaven, for expiation, and an assurance of forgiveness, he finds neither. The stars are dumb; there is no rain in the sweet heavens to wash away the stain of guilt. The cattle upon a thousand hills, offered as an expiation; rivers of sacrificial blood poured out upon countless altars,—not all this can cleanse the conscience or extinguish remorse. Nor does the voice of angel or spirit whisper: “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” And so palsied humanity lies helpless, with despairing wail and struggle, under the burden of its unexpiated guilt. And this, until it is brought helpless, and in mute penitence, to the feet of Jesus. There it finds that the “Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” There only it gains the blessed *assurance* of forgiveness; not the assurance of a mere external, judicial pardon—of a legal release from condemnation and the pains of hell, but something more sweet and heartfelt,—a *sense* of forgiveness and reconciliation shed abroad in the heart,—forgiveness *transitive* upon the sinner himself—felt, rejoiced in, and treasured up as a “hope that maketh not ashamed.”

The paralytic was forgiven first, and then healed. And so in all cases, forgiveness sooner or later draws after it deliverance from all kinds of evil. He whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity, will sooner or later be delivered

from all the bitter consequences, natural as well as moral, of his depravity. He is made an heir of life; death is abolished; he is assured of a double immortality,—an immortality of both soul and body. The act of forgiveness, like an unfading rainbow, bends over all the ages of his immortality. So blessed a thing is it to hear the voice of the Son of Man saying to us: “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

But the question naturally arises, how does the forgiven spirit thus hear the voice of the Son of man? How is the assurance of pardon communicated to the penitent sinner? And the question is an important one; for there is in the heart of every man in a natural state a deep distrust of God’s placability and mercy, as well as a fear of His justice and His wrath. With this instinctive doubt in the human soul all things seem to conspire: Nature gives no assurance, not even a hint that the infinite and holy sovereign of the universe will forgive sin; the law has but one stern, inexorable voice: “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” How to overcome this distrust; how to inspire a guilty soul with a reasonable hope of divine mercy; how to convince a rebel yet in arms that God is willing and waiting to be gracious;—this was one of the great problems which Jesus undertook to solve.

In the prosecution of this purpose, He made a clear, full and overpowering external manifestation of the goodness, the pity, the placability of God. This He did in all His teachings, His miracles, His sufferings, His death. Whoever saw Him in the flesh could no longer distrust the mercy of God; for Christ was divine mercy embodied in human form, speaking with a human voice, weeping human tears, stretching forth arms of human tenderness and pity toward the lost and wretched, and pouring out human blood upon the cross; all to manifest the forgiving love and pity of God towards sinners. His death has

been well and touchingly termed "the reconciliation-death;" "For He made His soul an offering for sin; He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* And, in full testimony of all this, the sinner has the "gracious words" of the everlasting gospel; the ever-living tokens of the holy sacraments, and the blood-washed church with its ministries of redeeming mercy.

But something more than this is necessary to make the general declaration of forgiveness *personal*: to bring it home with fulness and certainty to the individual soul. "THY sins be forgiven THEE." Here the narrative of the healing of the paralytic comes to our aid. He and his friends had heard of our Lord's power and kindness; they had a general assurance of His ability and willingness to heal. Confiding in this, they came to Jesus. "When He saw their faith,"—this includes the sufferer himself,—“He said to the sick of the palsy: Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” The faith of the subject preceded the definite assurance of forgiveness. And so it is in all cases. The forgiving mercy of God in Christ is declared *generally* to all the guilty and perishing. But to those who feel their guilt and misery, and who, with eyes fixed on the cross, cry: "God be merciful to me a sinner," there is granted on the ground of their faith, nay, *in* it, a direct *internal* assurance of their forgiveness.

This assurance is conveyed by no supernatural impression, no mysterious voice. It is recognized rather by its effects, of which this is the sum: *it is peace*. The sense of guilt is taken away; fear gives place to love; confidence supplants distrust. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart. The humble, adoring penitent begins to ex-

* Isaiah liii. 12.

ercise the faith of appropriation. His language is: "I believe, Lord, that thou lovest *me*, that thou forgivest *me*. Thou hast atoned for *my* sins; thou hast blotted them out as a cloud, and my transgressions as a thick cloud. I hear thy voice saying to me: 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.' The promises are made to *me*; pardon and life and salvation are sealed to *me*." It is proper, however, to guard against the error of assuming that this assurance is equally vivid in all justified persons, or in the same saint at all times. Either from temperament, condition or actual sin, the soul may at times be plunged into darkness and doubt. Nevertheless this divine testimony is given with greater or less clearness to every child of God; and it will be renewed with increased distinctness as often as, in the divine discipline of the soul, it seems desirable for its spiritual welfare.

CHAPTER VI.

JESUS REBUKES THE FORMALISM OF THE PHARISEES.

IMPORTANCE OF A JUST IDEA OF THE SECT OF THE PHARISEES—HUMAN NATURE TENDS TO FORMALISM—JUDAISM DESIGNED TO AWAKEN A SENSE OF SIN AND A LONGING FOR SPIRITUAL DELIVERANCE—JUDAISM IN THE TIME OF JESUS IN ITS DECLINE—THE PHARISEES—THEIR EARLIER POSTURE TOWARDS THE MISSION OF JESUS—THEIR FIRST OPEN RUPTURE WITH HIM—JESUS ABOUT TO JOIN ISSUE WITH THEM—THE CALLING OF LEVI—THE FEELINGS OF THE PHARISEES TOWARDS THE PUBLICANS—THEIR VIEW OF THE CALL OF LEVI AS AFFECTING THEM—THE DISCIPLES PLUCK AND EAT CORN ON THE SABBATH—THE PHARISEES COMPLAIN OF IT TO JESUS—HIS ANSWER—THE IMPOTENT MAN—THE PHARISEES QUESTION JESUS ABOUT HEALING ON THE SABBATH—HE RETORTS UPON THEM WITH ANOTHER QUESTION—HE HEALS THE WITHERED HAND—THE PHARISEES, ENRAGED, CONTEMPLATE OPEN HOSTILITY—NECESSARY CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND FORMALISM.

DURING our Lord's residence at Capernaum, several incidents occurred which brought Him more directly than ever before, into collision with the Pharisees. As we shall find them especially referred to in our Lord's teachings, and largely concerned in the hostile movements which resulted in the violent termination of His career, it becomes almost necessary to a right understanding of His life, that we attain just views of this remarkable sect.

Human nature, under whatever form of religion, universally tends to formalism. After a positive religion has outlived the fervor and freedom of its youth, unless counteracting forces come into play, it will crystallize into a system of frigid dogmas and prescribed ceremonies. There

is the clearest evidence that Judaism was, for many ages, full of vitality and power. Faith in a personal Jehovah, the living, almighty, holy, faithful God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob made the worship of the Hebrews spiritual and earnest. That faith, produced a deep sense of inward discord and wretchedness, such as is described in Paul's epistle to the Romans.* This awakened a longing for some divine deliverance, so that the Jewish mind was prepared to give credence to the choral voices of prophecy, singing from age to age the coming Redeemer.

But it was not only the mission of the Jewish system to awaken this expectation of deliverance, but also to demonstrate its own utter impotence. Hence, it was permitted to become old and effete ; to harden into a rigid formalism, which had just vitality enough to serve as a point of connection between the more devout and susceptible minds in the Jewish nation and the doctrines of Jesus. One fact sufficiently demonstrates that Judaism had entered upon this final stage, when, both without and within, it was well-nigh ossified. We refer to the fact that the sect of the Pharisees had come to be almost absolutely predominant throughout the nation. Indeed, it was indebted for its very existence, to a national consciousness of decay and incipient dissolution. Out of that consciousness arose a fond looking back towards the golden age of the theocracy, an eager catching at every gleam of tradition, an anxious preservation of every vestige of an idolized antiquity.

Hence, both in respect to doctrine and rites of worship, the Pharisees conformed to the traditions of the fathers. They attached less and less importance to the spiritual, and even to the moral part of religion, but were exact and ostentatious in the observance of mere external ceremonies. They were ingenious and unwearied in finding

* See Romans vii., *passim*.

grounds for excusing, and even justifying the most flagrant moral delinquencies; while they were intolerant and vindictive towards all who were chargeable with the least infraction of their traditions, and the least departure from their ceremonial observances. Their ablutions, their fastings and their prayers; their tithings and their alms-givings were all according to *rule*, and were regarded as meritorious in themselves, aside from the state of the heart. They affected an intense asceticism, altogether alien to the spirit of the Mosaic institutions, and to the earlier worship of Jehovah.

The people regarded their reverence for tradition as evincing a purer nationality of feeling; they accepted their rigorous asceticism as a more perfect *holiness*. These came to be regarded as the peculiar, the distinguishing characteristics of the sect, and drew about them the wealth, the learning, and the piety of the nation. They thus came to be an organized, numerous and powerful sect. The majority of the priests and rulers belonged to their number; and hence, the affairs of the nation, both ecclesiastical and civil, came under their almost supreme control. Their schools were so famous that the most intelligent young men of the nation resorted to them; many, even, like Saul of Tarsus, from distant lands. The heads of the sect, among whom in the time of Christ was Gamaliel (for more than thirty years president of the Sanhedrim), resided in Jerusalem; but a multitude of adherents were scattered through all the cities and villages of the Holy Land. These were everywhere held in the highest veneration, and were, in fact, the religious teachers and governors of the people.

We are now prepared to understand the position assumed by the Pharisees with regard to the new religion and its teachers. Two years had elapsed since John the Baptist began to preach among the hills of Judea,—

"Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." A large number of the sect, carried away by the general enthusiasm, had come to his baptism. They did not at first oppose him; they never did so *openly*. Possibly, many were willing to believe that he was really commissioned to proclaim the advent of the expected Messiah. Hence, when Jesus was baptized by John; and when afterwards He was publicly pointed out as the Messiah, they maintained a cautious reserve. They neither acknowledged nor denounced Him. Events had not yet so far developed His true character or claims, as to render either course politic or necessary. Hence, they took precisely the ground which we should have expected from a sect so intelligent, respectable and conservative: they treated Jesus with distant courtesy, listened closely to His discourses, witnessed His miracles with cold curiosity, and said nothing.

As events progressed, however, and it became evident that Jesus was not a person likely to sympathize with them, or to contribute to their prestige and power, their suspicions were awakened, and they became really hostile to His movements. Yet, as He seemed to be a strict observer of the law, and was evidently possessed of supernatural powers, they were unable to obtain any plausible hold upon Him, and were therefore deterred from evincing their hostility openly. Hence for more than a year they permitted Him to prosecute His mission unmolested, although they kept close watch upon all His movements. Their first open rupture with Him occurred in connection with the healing of the impotent man on the Sabbath day, an account of which has already been given. They then became satisfied that He was at heart hostile to them. They assumed that He was opposed to the law, and charged Him with blasphemous assumption in calling Himself the Son of God,—a title which they held could be claimed by

none but the Messiah Himself. Against His Messiahship they at once arrayed themselves, and so—there being no alternative—settled it that He was a heretic, a blasphemer, and a seditious leader. They, therefore, at once took measures which looked ultimately to the destruction of His influence with the people and to His judicial murder.

At this we shall be less surprised when we reflect that as a powerful hierarchy becomes hollow and hypocritical, it magnifies the importance of formal orthodoxy. A departure from the established creed and the prevailing forms comes to be regarded by them with greater horror than open profligacy. In process of time, these self-constituted guardians of orthodoxy lose their power to discriminate between error and mere innovation—between reformation and heresy. Every one who refuses to submit with implicit faith to their decisions will, therefore, be condemned by them as a criminal, and, provided the power is not wanting, will be punished as such. Hence, every old and corrupt sect has always been ready to start the hue and cry of heresy and blasphemy, whenever a bold and zealous reformer has risen to expose and rebuke its corruption. Witness the anathematizing Church of Rome, drunk with the blood of the saints. Witness the treatment received at its hands by Luther, Melancthon, Zwingle, Cranmer, and even Arnould, Pascal and Savonarola, to say nothing of hundreds of others of her own communion whose complaint and outcries were summarily stifled amidst the darkness and the damps of her inquisitorial dungeons. It matters not whether it be a Papal or a Pharisaical hierarchy; human nature is the same. Hence, Jesus was marked out for persecution and martyrdom.

Such was the posture of the Pharisees at the time when this part of our narrative opens. There was imposed upon Jesus the necessity of asserting His entire independence

of them, of defending Himself against their attacks, and of unmasking their corruption and hypocrisy. Several incidents occurred during His sojourn at Capernaum, which clearly evinced His purpose in this direction, and which had the effect of exasperating them in the extreme.

The high road from Damascus to the cities along the coast, passing by Jacob's bridge over the Jordan, ran thence along the shore of Lake Gennesaret, and through Capernaum. On this road, and near its entrance into the city, there appears to have been a place of toll. Here sat Levi, a publican, one of the Roman tax-gatherers so hateful to the people. Passing near the place one day, our Lord observing Levi, who is believed to be identical with Matthew, said to him, "Follow me." Obeying the divine call, Levi immediately abandoned his business and followed Jesus, becoming one of His acknowledged disciples. With regard to the effect of the call of Levi, or Matthew, on the Pharisees, the evangelist gives us little direct information. Still it is evident from the nature of the case that it must have been highly distasteful to them. The publicans were a despised and hated class. Their presence among the Jews was a constant reminder of the subjugated state of the nation,—of its helpless dependence on the will of a detested heathen power. Any civil recognition of them was synonymous, therefore, with a want of patriotic regard for Jewish nationality.

Besides this, it is quite evident from subsequent events, that the Pharisees looked upon such attention on the part of Jesus to the publicans as indicative of His personal contempt for their sect and its claims to superior holiness. As He claimed to be the Messiah, it amounted to a rejection of them, as unworthy a part in His mission or a place in His kingdom. Skeptical as they were with regard to His Messiahship, they were too proud not to feel such a slight, when put upon them before the very eyes of the

multitude, and by a man so far acknowledged as a prophet of indisputable purity and power.

The consciousness that our Lord looked upon them with growing disfavor, led the Pharisees to seek for occasion to depreciate His claims to higher religious views and superior personal holiness. An incident soon occurred which gave them the much coveted opportunity. It was now the time of harvest. The fields were yellow with the ripened wheat. Passing, one Sabbath day, through a neighboring wheat-field, perhaps on their way to the synagogue, our Lord's disciples, being hungry, plucked the ears of corn, and, rubbing them in their hands, separated the grain from the chaff, and ate it. This was expressly allowed by the law of Moses, and hence appears to have occasioned no misgiving on their part. The Pharisees, however, had put such acts among the labors which were prohibited on the Sabbath day. They therefore come to Jesus and apprise Him of this grave misdemeanor on the part of His followers. "Behold," say they, "Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day!"*

Our Lord, who knew at once that the reproof was intended for Him rather than His disciples, defends Himself by urging the superiority of a free obedience to the *spirit* of the law, over a slavish conformity to its letter. He takes them upon their own ground of peculiar reverence for the law, by citing from Jewish history several examples of an innocent, and even commendable violation of the letter of the law. "David," says He, "when fleeing from the wrath of Saul, entered the tabernacle, and not only partook of the consecrated shew-bread, which was forbidden to any but the priests, but gave it to his associates. Nay, you have an example in your own times.

* Matthew xii. 2.

Your priests themselves, in their Sabbath ministrations, perform many acts of physical labor; but you do not charge them with sin." Knowing that the Pharisees would allege that the *temple* consecrated the labor of the priests, He gave them to understand that there was One present who was greater than the temple. Jesus was in fact the *true* temple, of which the other was only the type. If, then, those who served the latter might labor on the Sabbath in that service, how much more might those who served the former.

He now proceeds to press a truth upon them which they must have felt as a pointed personal rebuke. He virtually charges them with ignorance of their own prophets. He refers them to the language of God as given by Hosea; "I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings."* "If," said He, "ye had known what this meaneth, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."† That is: "If you had understood your own sacred writings; if you had had any just comprehension of the spirit of your own religion, you would have known that *love* and *mercy* are greater than all ceremonial service; and you would have shown your regard for them, by forbearing to condemn the innocent." Having thus indicated the purpose of the Sabbath, as made for man's comfort and blessing,—as designed not to burden or enslave him, but to be beneficently used by him; He proceeds to assert His absolute authority over the Sabbath,—in fact, over all times and seasons. "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day,"‡ says He, and with this startling declaration, abruptly dismisses the subject, and leaves them.

The Pharisees, though silenced by our Lord's bold and searching language, were not convinced. On the very

* Hosea vi. 6.

† Matthew xii. 7.

‡ Matthew xii. 8.

next Sabbath they find occasion to renew their attack. Our Lord was present in the synagogue, where there was a man who had a withered hand. The muscles of his arm seem to have been shrunk and paralyzed so that the limb was both deformed and useless. The affection was the more severe, because it was the right hand which was withered. Seizing upon his case as one likely to excite the compassion of Jesus, and to call forth His exercise of this healing power, His watchful enemies indirectly called His attention to the man by the apparently innocent question; "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?"* Fully comprehending their malicious design, Jesus immediately caused the man to stand forth in the sight of the assembled congregation, that his miserable condition might be apparent to all and might appeal to their common humanity. Having done this, He turns upon His persecutors with another question; "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life or to kill?"†

This was a master-stroke. As with a flash of light, it revealed the false and fatal issue which the Pharisees had forced upon themselves. In their minds the question lay simply between *doing* and *not doing*; the real alternative was that of *doing good* or *doing evil*. That this was so is evident; for, had our Lord in the present case refused to heal the miserable sufferer,—who, according to a very ancient tradition, was a mason, and therefore dependent on his hands for his subsistence, it would have been doing evil; it would have been equivalent to *destroying life*. To cure him was to enable him to support life; was in fact to save life. Pressing His argument further, He demands of them: "What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much,

* Matthew xii. 10.

† Matthew xiii. 4.

then, is a man better than a sheep?"* "Would you forbid the Great Shepherd to save one of His human flock, fallen under so dire a calamity as this? Would you have Me less merciful to a man, than you would be to a brute? Your question solves itself. 'It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.'"[†]

Conclusive as was this reasoning, the Pharisees were too uncandid and stubborn to acknowledge it: they answered Him not a word. Aroused by this ungenerous behavior on their part, He "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts," and at once asserted His right and His power to heal on the Sabbath. "Stretch forth thine hand!" said He to the man, with an energy and a look of majesty which must have been startling and sublime. And the man stretched forth his hand, and it was made whole like the other. Here, then, He had healed a man on the Sabbath, not privately, as at Bethesda, but in the open synagogue, in the very face of His adversaries; in defiance of their express challenge of His right to do so. They were confounded and filled with rage. Going out, they consulted with certain Herodians, courtiers of Herod Antipas, who happened to be there, how they might destroy Him. Open war was declared. Accepting the conflict, Jesus henceforth with the utmost fearlessness ceased not to warn His disciples and the people against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

The only lesson to be drawn from these events, which we pause to notice, is that of the uselessness of all attempts at compromising between Christianity and formalism. There is no common ground for them; there can be no peace between them. Whatever delay there may be, ultimate and irreconcilable conflict is inevitable. Christianity may treat formalism as Jesus did the Pharisees,

* Matthew xii. 11, 12.

† Matthew xii. 12.

with courtesy and gentleness ; it is of no avail. In whatever age, under whatever name it may manifest itself, it is morally certain that Pharisaism will array itself against "pure religion and undefiled." After eighteen centuries, its arrogance, bigotry, and hatred of the "truth as it is in Jesus," are still patent to the view and abhorrence of mankind.

CHAPTER VII.

JESUS CHOOSES THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

JESUS WITHDRAWS FROM CAPERNAUM—HE GOES UP INTO THE MOUNTAIN AND SPENDS THE NIGHT IN PRAYER—OCCASION FOR THE CALLING OF THE APOSTLES—HE SUMMONS THE TWELVE INTO HIS PRESENCE—THE MEN CHOSEN OF NO INFERIOR ORDER—SIMON: HIS CHARACTER: PRE-EMINENCE IN THE APOSTOLIC COLLEGE—ANDREW: ANTECEDENT HISTORY: HIS PECULIAR RELATION TO JESUS: CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS—THE “SONS OF ZEBEDEE”—JAMES: HIS CHARACTER AND RELATIVE PROMINENCE—JOHN: HIS COMPARATIVE YOUTH: HIS CHARACTER: HIS IMPORTANT RELATION TO THE CHURCH AS A THEOLOGIAN AND PROPHET—PHILIP: HIS LEADING TRAITS—BARTHOLOMEW: IDENTITY WITH NATHANAEL, AND HIS CHARACTER—THOMAS: HIS PECULIARITIES—MATTHEW: BRIEF NOTICE OF—JAMES THE LESS: CHARACTER, AND POSITION IN THE CHURCH—JUDE: PERSONAL TRAITS—SIMON ZELOTES: CHARACTER AS A ZEALOT—JUDAS ISCARIOT: MYSTERY RELATIVE TO HIS ANTECEDENTS: FIRST THEORY AS TO HIS CHARACTER AND COURSE: SECOND THEORY: PROBABLE TRUTH AS TO HIS CASE: MYSTERY AS TO OUR LORD’S SELECTION OF SUCH A CHARACTER—CLOSING THOUGHTS.

JESUS, knowing that the Pharisees and Herodians had conspired to put Him out of the way, now withdrew from Capernaum to a neighboring part of the coast. Here His presence was eagerly sought by multitudes who came from the extremities of Palestine, and even from beyond its borders, to hear the words and witness the mighty works of the Great Prophet. Such was the pressure of the people upon Him, in their eagerness to get near His person, that it at length became necessary for a boat to wait upon Him, so that He might, when occasion required, betake Himself to it, and thus address the hearers upon the shore without discomfort or danger. His labors during

this period must have been excessive. The cures which He wrought were numerous and extraordinary.

Let us contemplate a scene which was presented at the close of one of these His missionary days. It is evening. The gold and crimson are fading from the western sky, and from the placid surface of Gennesaret. The stars—such stars as we never see in our less transparent sky—come out in their splendor, and look down tenderly on the shrouded landscape. The multitude, some short time since dismissed by our Lord, are scattered among the neighboring villages in search of food and lodging. All is now quiet, where so lately was heard the hum of thronging multitudes. Turn now your gaze to yonder mountain ridge rising from the dusky plain, with its three horns* or cones sharply defined against the clear star-lit sky. Look intently and you will see through the darkness a solitary figure ascending the steep acclivity. No sound from the world below can reach that lofty height; all is still and solemn as eternity. There alone and under the open heavens, Jesus bows Himself to the earth in prayer. The evangelist Luke records that He “continued all night in prayer to God.”†

The occasion of these solemn communings with the Father was this. He was about to take an important step in advance. During several months, He had preached the approaching kingdom of God, in Judea and Galilee. The hearts of thousands had been touched; the hearts of a few had been stirred to their lowest depths. A considerable number had come to discern in Him the Christ, the Son of the living God, and they were longing for His manifest-

*For indications that the hill, known as the “Horns of Hattin,” was the “Mount of Beatitudes,” see Stanley’s “Sinai and Palestine,” page 360; Andrews’ “Life of Christ,” page 248.

† Luke vi. 12.

ation. As yet, however, the movement had been purely spontaneous and unorganized. The time had come for our Lord to institute the germ and nucleus of His church. The twelve foundation-stones of the temple were to be selected, hewn and polished. He was about to choose and commission His APOSTLES.

The immediate and visible occasion of the calling of the apostles was that very concourse of the people which we have so often noticed. It had become apparent that Jesus could not personally impart instruction to all who resorted to Him; neither could He with His own hands heal the multitude of sick who were brought to Him. Hence His more intelligent and devoted disciples were to be His authorized ministers, both in teaching and in working miracles. Some of them were qualified to proclaim the first principles of the Kingdom of God; and to heal in His name and by His power. Through them He might multiply Himself, so that those who were like sheep scattered abroad might in some degree be shepherded under His gracious care.

Not only were the apostles thus to be selected for this special work; their office was intended to endure and be more largely developed after His removal from the scenes of His earthly ministry. They were to be witnesses of His life, death, resurrection and ascension, not only to the Jews, but also to all nations; and, under their fostering care, the Church was to grow up from a feeble infancy to vigorous youth. They were to be replenished with the life of their glorified Master, and to be Christ to the world. They were to be inspired by the Holy Comforter, to teach and govern and feed His flock, bought with His own blood; and they were to be invested with supreme authority on earth. We cannot doubt that Jesus saw the end from the beginning. His plan was fully settled. His Church, in its final and perfect organization, was clearly discerned

by His prophetic eye, which looked far beyond His personal ministry,—far beyond the cross; far beyond the day of Pentecost; far beyond the “lost sheep of the House of Israel,”—to ages and nations hidden from other eyes in the darkness of the future. What wonder that, when about to call and ordain His apostles,—the first step in the organization of His Church,—He spent a whole night, on that lonely mountain in prayer.

The morning at length dawned. The multitude came together at an early hour, and thronged up the mountain slope. But they were arrested ere they reached the summit, even the disciples being kept back from the little plateau where Jesus was seated. Those, and those only, came near Him whom He called by name. Those who were thus summoned were His chosen *apostles*. The list is, on many accounts, worthy of profound study. It displays the far-seeing wisdom of Him who looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart; and who selects His servants and ministers, not according to the maxims of worldly prudence and political sagacity, but on principles which to the world are not only incomprehensible but foolish.

“It behooved Him to select a number of men in whom the riches of His life might be unfolded in every direction. For this end He needed above all, people in whom the glory of His spirit and the peculiarity of His work might be distinctly identified;—laymen, who would not chain His work to existing priestly habits; unlearned men, who would not mix up His wisdom with traditional schemes of philosophy; yes, even comparatively uneducated men, at any rate, homely men, in order that the dulled taste of a diseased worldly civilization might not disturb the culture which the spirit of the incarnate Word was to impart to them. It was through fishermen, country people and publicans, that the word of God in

the life and doings of Christ was to be declared in its purity."*

The apostles were therefore selected from the better class of the Galilean peasantry, among whom the simple, intense faith of the age of the Maccabees seems to have withstood both the traditional formalism of the Pharisees, and the insidious poison of the Greek culture. As belonging, however, to a commercial community, they were of a freer and more liberal spirit than the Jews of southern Palestine. There is reason also to believe that they were of respectable social standing, and by no means absolutely illiterate. Some of them were in comfortable circumstances, the owners of fishing-boats and houses; and others were engaged in civil employment which implied a tolerable education. They were probably good specimens of their class, and withal, possessed of a natural aptitude for the work to which they were now called.

The first who was summoned by the voice of the Master was SIMON THE SON OF JONAS, a fisherman of Bethsaida, not far from Capernaum at the northern extremity of the lake. Of an affectionate, impetuous nature, his manner of life, though not incompatible with considerable mental culture, had tended to make him somewhat rough in temper, abrupt and bluff in speech and manners, and daring even to recklessness, when pursuing his avocation on the waters of that fickle and dangerous inland sea. Though there is no reason to charge him with any disreputable crimes, we infer from one or two passages in his later history that he was, in his youth, addicted to the thoroughly oriental vices of profanity and falsehood. There was in his character, however, a strong substratum of truth. His religious susceptibility was quick and profound: his spiritual discernment was extraordinary; and he was capable

* Lange's "Life of Christ," vol. iii., page 45.

of a faith, which no external opposition and no vacillation of his own somewhat unsteady temperament could shake; a frenzied impulse of natural fear might lead him to disguise or even deny his inward convictions; but they never failed speedily to reassert their authority and demand a free and bold expression, even in the face of blood-thirsty enemies and at the risk of martyrdom. This rock-like faith was set forth in the name which was given him by Jesus Himself,—Peter or Cephas. He was capable of the most tender attachments; and all the love of his generous heart had been concentrated on Jesus, whom he, first of all the disciples, confessed as *the Christ, the Son of the living God*.

The story of his conversion has been already told, and discloses those peculiar characteristics which qualified him for a certain leadership in the primitive church. Peter, though afterwards chastened by trial, and softened and subdued by the meek and lowly Spirit of Christ, could hold no second place among the apostles. If, as tradition asserts, he was an aged man when he suffered martyrdom, A. D. 64,—he must have been several years older than our Lord. This circumstance would, of itself, make him somewhat prominent among his colleagues, the most of whom were undoubtedly somewhat younger.

“Peter stood before Christ as the foreman of his band; an eagle mind, fitted by its depth and ardor strongly and clearly to feel the whole character of Christ, and to receive it into its own depths;—a popular spirit in the noblest sense, who could work on the people with the most effective arguments, and deeply penetrate into the world; an heroic, fiery, energetic man, who was ever ready to strike at the decisive moment, and regardless of consequences to send forth his blows, first in a fleshly and afterwards in a spiritual manner; in his large elastic sympathy now constituted a pioneer, and now a medi-

ator;—in the firm, rock-like solidity of his inmost character, the first leader, founder, and guide of the Church of Christ.”*

After Peter, ANDREW his brother, was called up by Jesus. Andrew had been a disciple of the Baptist, and was one of the two who followed Jesus when John pointed Him out at Bethabara as the “*Lamb of God*.” From this he would seem to have been the very first who believed. He evinced something of his character as an active believer, in immediately seeking out his brother Simon, and saying to him: “We have found the Messiah.” It would appear from this incident, and from his subsequent services in introducing strangers to Jesus, that he stood in somewhat peculiar and intimate relations to our Lord. Thus the Greeks† who desired to see Jesus, first made their wish known to *Philip*. “Philip cometh and telleth Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.” Andrew, too, was among the four favored apostles who came to our Lord after His prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and requested the explanation which is so fully recorded by Matthew.‡ We infer from all this that Andrew was more than most of his fellow-apostles in the confidence of Jesus.

Though the notices given of Andrew in the gospel, are few and scattered, they disclose a most interesting, though not striking character. He seems to have been of a modest, retiring spirit, shrinking from every semblance of public exhibition, yet so full of gentleness and humility, so full of faith and love, so devoted in his attachment to his Master, and so zealous and prudent in his efforts to bring others to His knowledge and acquaintance, that he

* “*Lange’s Life of Christ*,” vol. 3, page 47.

† See John xii. 20.

‡ See Matthew xxiv.

was not only admitted more freely and fully to our Lord's confidence than the majority of the disciples, but was regarded by Him as well calculated to check and chasten the headlong zeal of his brother Simon, and eminently fitted for the more private labors of the ministry to which he was called.

After the sons of Jonas come the sons of Zebedee, JAMES and JOHN. They probably resided at or near Capernaum, and as they were the owners of their ships and nets, and had servants in their employ, they would seem to have been in comfortable circumstances for men of their class. Their mother, who was probably a sister of the mother of Jesus,* was evidently a woman not only of great energy of character, but of large faith and ardent devotion—characteristics which were impressed on her sons, who were surnamed by their contemporaries, Boanerges, or sons of thunder.

JAMES was, without doubt, a man of ardent temperament and extraordinary energy. He had from the first a chief place among the apostles, and ultimately attained a position of great authority in the church at Jerusalem. His devotion, promptitude and vigor in that position, soon drew upon him the attention of Herod Agrippa, who, evidently regarding him as the most conspicuous leader of the church, thought to strike it a decisive blow by summarily putting him to the sword. James fell, the first of the apostolic martyrs.

JOHN, the younger brother of James, was probably the most youthful of the apostles. As he survived till the reign of Trajan, he could hardly have been born before the year 4 B. C.; he was probably born several years later, and so was the junior of our Lord. His extreme

* This point, although not settled, has many plausible arguments in its favor. See Smith's "Bible Dictionary," article "Salome."

youth at the time of his call appears to have kept him somewhat in the background; for he was at first less prominent and influential in the church than his brother James. In addition to this it may be reasonably conjectured that he was not largely gifted with oral eloquence, and still less with executive ability and the gift of rule. Unlike James, who, endowed with an organizing mind and a decisive energy, was eminently an apostle for his own times, John was the apostle for later ages.

In his youth, he was distinguished not so much for active, public labors as for his singular purity, the sweetness of his disposition, and the depth of his faith and spiritual insight;—traits which won him a profound and tender reverence. In his natural temperament and qualities of mind and heart, he closely resembled Jesus, and for that reason he became “that disciple whom Jesus loved.” The relation between Jesus and John was one of intimate, confiding *friendship*.^{*} Leaning on the bosom of the Saviour, he drank in more of His spirit than any other disciple. The most important part of John’s apostolic work was reserved for his old age, when his colleagues had all been gathered to their rest. Then it was that he appeared as the inspired mediator between the different schools, calling themselves by the names of Paul and Peter and James, which had sprung up in the church. In his grand catholicity of doctrine, the seeming discrepancies in the teachings of the elder apostles were harmonized, and appeared as essential parts of one comprehensive system. In the directness and terrible energy of his denunciation when dealing with error, he fully vindicates his right to be called a “son of thunder.” Next to his Master, John was the great prophet and theologian of the

^{*} See Robert Hall’s inimitable sermon on the words: “That disciple whom Jesus loved.”

New Covenant: he was pre-eminently ordained as the apostle for the church of the "last days."

Of PHILIP, the next in the list, but little is known. He also was of Bethsaida, and a friend of Peter and Andrew, probably also of the sons of Zebedee. Early called to follow Jesus, he began at once to invite others to "come and see" the Saviour whom he had found. "In every situation in which he comes before us, he always displays a quick and vigorous mind, joined with the tendency to assure himself, as much as possible, of the invisible through concrete evidence and sensuous experience."* "Show us the Father," was a request which manifested an extreme and even morbid craving for outward, matter-of-fact demonstration.

The next in order who was called to the apostleship was BARTHOLOMEW, evidently a surname, signifying *the son of Tholmai*, just as Simon Peter was called Bar-jona, *the son of Jonah*. As the gospel of John never mentions the name of Bartholomew, but often speaks of Nathaniel as familiarly associated with the apostles; and as again the other gospels do not mention Nathaniel at all, it is almost certain that the names belonged to one and the same person—Nathaniel Bartholomew. The character of this apostle was summed up by Christ Himself in the remarkable words, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."

The character of Thomas, surnamed Didymus or the Twin, is clearly drawn with a few bold strokes. Devotedly attached to Jesus, and willing even to die with Him, he has nevertheless been well called the skeptical apostle. His steadfast refusal to believe in the resurrection of Christ till he had had ocular and even tactual evidence of the fact, displays a spirit of doubt more nearly allied to the

* Lange's "Life of Christ," vol. 3, page 50.

nineteenth century than the first. His doubting, however, was not the fruit of a frivolous, but of a melancholy turn of mind,—that doubting of the struggling soul which God guides to certainty.

MATTHEW, who humbly calls himself the publican, is portrayed in his own gospel. He was especially chosen that he might record the teachings of Jesus. We can not doubt that he made copious memoranda, from day to day, of the wondrous sayings which fell from the Saviour's lips.

We assume, without argument, that JAMES THE SON OF ALPHEUS, sometimes called James the less, is identical with that James who was called the brother of the Lord. Though the point is still vigorously controverted, the current of opinion among scholars can not be mistaken, and is daily becoming deeper and stronger. In the Acts of the Apostles, and in his epistle, he appears as a calm, wise, conciliatory ruler of the church, seeking earnestly both purity and peace, and devoted rather to practical Christianity than to the defense of dogma, leaning even, one would say, towards a certain evangelical legalism put forth to modify and complement the teachings of Paul touching faith and works. That he himself, residing as he did at Jerusalem, strictly kept the law of Moses, and was eminent even among the Jews themselves for his personal sanctity, is the testimony of early Christian tradition.

The Apostle JUDE, called Lebbeus in the first gospel and Thaddeus in the second, loved to call himself "the brother of James." He would appear to have been a man of most intense convictions and ardent zeal. Some passages in his epistle give him a strong resemblance to Peter.

SIMON ZELOTES, also called the Canaanite, "had been a zealot, i. e., one who like Phinehas (Numbers xxv. 7,) interfered to put down offences and abuses, not only as

the prophets did by words, but also by deeds. The party of the zealots which afterwards, during the Jewish war, distracted Jerusalem, had not as yet been formed, but its germ was already in existence.”* Simon it would seem had been of a fiery and intolerant spirit, but was now chastened and subdued by the teachings and life of his Master, to whose service he devoted all the energy of his burning soul.

The last figure in this procession is that of JUDAS ISCARIOT,—a name that thrills the soul with horror, and presents some of the most mysterious and painful problems with which the Christian is ever called to grapple. Where he was born, what his calling was before he became a disciple, what his associations had been, what the motives were which prompted him to follow Jesus,—all is a mystery. One interpretation of his surname makes him a native of Kerioth in the tribe of Judah; another, of Kartha in Galilee; but these are mere conjectures, unsupported by more than the faintest shadow of probability. His character is almost equally a puzzle to those who have made it a special study. By the majority of commentators and preachers, he has been represented as a vulgar worldling, without any elevated views or profound convictions. Entrusted with the purse of the little society, and thus exposed to the temptation to appropriate a portion of the funds to his own use, he became a thief; and finding that Jesus began to treat him with distrust and to drop frequent hints of ominous and terrible meaning, he finally resolved, influenced partly by fear and partly by revenge, to betray his Master into the hands of his enemies.

Another theory, elaborated by De Quincy with great rhetorical beauty, makes Judas a man of deep and subtle policy, who, believing in Jesus as a secular and Jewish

* De Wette *zei* Matthew, page 79.

Messiah, and coming in time to distrust His practical energy and decision, aimed to precipitate a crisis by which Jesus would be compelled to proclaim His character as the Son of David, exert His supernatural powers in self-defence, and rally the people to His standard. The great objection to this ingenious theory is its ingenuity. It seems scarcely reasonable to ascribe to a Jewish peasant of that age so subtle a policy, a scheme so intricate and far-reaching.

Perhaps each view contains an element of truth. Judas was doubtless avaricious and fell into the sin of embezzlement; but he was not at first a vulgar thief. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He would *speedily* set up a worldly kingdom in which he hoped to fill the office of treasurer. But in process of time it became apparent that Jesus meditated no such revolution as he was looking for; and consequently his belief in His Messiahship was shaken. Perhaps the thought occurred to him that Jesus might extricate Himself from the plots of His blood-thirsty enemies by miracle; and in that case no harm would be done by his treason—perhaps even great good might result from it. Thus his motives from the very first were probably mixed. When he first came to Jesus he was not without germs of good; but he was utterly corrupted by avarice, the master passion of his soul.

How Jesus, knowing as He did, even from the first, that Judas was a devil, could choose him for one of His apostles, has been regarded as a difficult and painful problem. But it is a special form of that great problem which we encounter whenever we think of the Divine purposes in relation to the sins of men. We can only say that, while the wickedness of Judas was exclusively his own, it is also true that his wickedness was, not prompted, but *overruled*, by the will of God for the accomplishment of His purpose in sending into the world His only begotten Son. The

unspeakable crime of Judas hastened the great sacrifice by which the reconciliation between God and man was consummated.

Thus, then, Jesus has called around Him on the mountain summit, His twelve apostles. The very number is significant; for it corresponds to the tribal division of the theocratic people; and it signifies, as a mystic, symbolical number, completeness and perfection. On this foundation of the apostles, Jesus intended to rear the august superstructure of His church. They were, however, to be trained for their great work under His own eye; and they were to be taught, first of all, the grand fundamental laws of the new and glorious kingdom of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

THE CALLING OF THE APOSTLES AN IMPORTANT EPOCH—NECESSITY DETERMINING OUR LORD'S CHOICE OF MODES OF TEACHING—HIS TEACHING BY HIS ACTS—TEACHING BY DIALOGUE—TEACHING BY MAXIMS—TEACHING BY PARABLES—THE CREATED UNIVERSE A SYSTEM OF DIVINE SYMBOLS—THE KEY TO THESE SYMBOLS LOST BY MAN AT THE FALL—JESUS THE DIVINE EXPOUNDER OF THESE SYMBOLS—HIS CHOICE OF PARABLES AS A MEANS OF INSTRUCTION AN EVIDENCE OF HIS WISDOM—THE WONDERFUL POWER OF HIS PARABLES AS A MEANS OF UNFOLDING TRUTH—THE BREADTH AND FULNESS OF THESE PARABLES NOT YET CONCEIVED OR UNFOLDED—WHY THE NEW TESTAMENT REPORT OF OUR LORD'S TEACHINGS IS NOT MORE COMPLETE—CLOSING REMARKS.

THE calling of the twelve apostles was an important epoch in our Lord's ministry. For the first time He was to employ chosen ministers to preach the glad tidings. Their commission was indeed limited to a special work and to a brief period, but it was truly apostolic. They were to teach and work miracles in the name of Christ; but they were to avoid Gentiles and Samaritans, doubtless because as yet they were not qualified to instruct those who were utterly ignorant of the first principles of revealed religion, and not animated with the hope of the Messianic kingdom. Their mission therefore was restricted to the covenant people. But the proper prosecution of this work was no easy thing, and required no ordinary preparation. Preaching the gospel, even to the Jews, had become a delicate and dangerous thing. The Pharisees

and the scribes had broken with Jesus ; they had begun to denounce Him as an enemy of the law and a blasphemer ; they had filled the land with false and exaggerated reports of His teachings ; and had already, with the Herodians, plotted His destruction. Yet these haughty and able foes the disciples would be sure to encounter ; they would have to meet their subtle cavilings ; they would at least be compelled to proclaim, under their searching and jealous scrutiny, the first principles of the new religion.

For the undertaking of this difficult mission the apostles were imperfectly prepared. They had, as yet, crude and inadequate views of the kingdom of God, and were in other respects but poorly furnished. They were, however, possessed of some advantages which only needed to be supplemented by the special instructions of their divine Master, to fit them in an eminent degree for their great work. They were of a hardy and vigorous stock ; they were themselves from among the masses, and hence, more in contact and sympathy with them,—a fact suggestive to the rulers of the church in every age ;—and they were empowered to do many mighty works which their adversaries would neither be able to gainsay nor resist. It was, however, no part of our Lord's plan to rely upon undisciplined talent or zeal. His chosen apostles must be instructed in the grand fundamental principles of the religion they were to profess and propagate. This body of instruction is contained chiefly in what is called the "Sermon on the Mount,"—a discourse worthy of special consideration. It is proper, however, before entering upon that work, that we should give some preliminary attention to our Lord's modes of teaching.

Jesus, the Word made flesh, was the Light of the world. As the mediator between God and man, He bridged over the chasm between the Infinite Intelligence and human thought. It was His office to bring down absolute truth

to the apprehension of finite minds. And it was not alone the weakness and limitation of the human faculties which made this difficult, but the prejudices engendered by selfishness and sin. Man's blindness to Divine things was *moral* in its nature and origin; his ignorance was wilful and malignant. Hence when Jesus came among men, He could only penetrate their dark minds by accommodating the mode of His teaching to their mental and moral condition. This necessity determined the several forms of His teaching, and also accounts for that marked *reserve* in His utterances which has often been observed.

Of the four modes of teaching noticeable in Jesus as the world-prophet, perhaps the most impressive was His conveying instruction by means of His *acts*, especially His miracles. In every thing which Jesus did, He revealed the Father; He manifested His own divinity as the only begotten Son of God; He displayed the divine compassion and power as opposed to the moral corruption and ruin of man; and He set in view of the world a perfect example of virtue and goodness. All the miracles of Christ demonstrated some truth and brought it vividly home to the hearts of men. This is overlooked by those who assert that the *words* of Jesus contain all that is of permanent spiritual value to mankind. The *words* and *works* belong equally to His prophetic function; taken together, they contain the perfect self-revelation of Him who said, "I am the truth."

Again: our Lord in His intercourse with individuals often taught by *dialogue*. No other method is so effectual to convince men of their ignorance and error, to awaken in them a spirit of inquiry, to remove their doubts and difficulties, and to lead them up to higher and yet higher attainments. This accordingly was the mode adopted by the wisest of uninspired teachers, Socrates. Jesus was almost always surrounded by disciples and friends,—

not seldom by cavilers and enemies. To strengthen the former and silence the latter, He often proceeded in the way of question and answer—of free conversation. Many of His most pregnant sayings were uttered in this way.

In the third place, our Lord often taught,—especially when surrounded by hearers who were peculiarly susceptible and docile,—in maxims or apothegms, which presented great truths in sharp, compact, and luminous forms that were often highly symbolical, and were fitted to take at once a strong hold on the imagination, memory, and conscience.

Lastly, many of our Lord's discourses were purely didactic, conveying in consecutive form, and with singular directness, those great truths which could be apprehended only by those who were already enlightened and penetrated with His Spirit. Such was the Sermon on the Mount, and such His valedictory discourse as recorded by John. In these, however, and in others of the same class, there is a large intermixture of apothegm and parable; for the highest spiritual truth finds its most complete and effective expression in symbol.

As the most striking and distinctive feature of the teachings of Jesus, the *parable* is justly deserving of especial attention. Wise men and seers have always regarded this outward, natural world as a sublime system of symbols, by which spiritual things are set forth to those who have eyes to see. God has represented His thoughts in the works of His hand; His eternal ideas are realized and bodied forth in the creation. The world with its innumerable forms of existence, corresponds to an ideal pattern in the consciousness of the Eternal Intelligence,—the Divine Word by whom all things were made.

This revelation of the divine in natural symbols was doubtless legible to unfallen man. But in the fall the key to this knowledge was lost, and ever since, only in-

spired men, seers, have been able to read and interpret the mystic hand-writing of Jehovah. But when the Eternal Word was Himself made flesh He had insight to see and wisdom to expound those "heavenly things," which He had wrapped up in natural symbols. To His eyes nothing was unmeaning, nothing undivine; for the material world appeared to Him as an effluence from the spiritual, as indeed its living vesture and manifestation. Hence He opened His mouth in parables, employing the objects, scenes and processes of the natural world to represent those spiritual realities which could not be made so intelligible, fresh, and quickening in an abstract didactic form.

During this period of His ministry, our Lord was surrounded by eager, excited crowds of Galilean peasants, totally unaccustomed to abstract speculation; but if they had been ever so highly cultivated He would probably have spoken to them in parables; there is no other method of religious teaching so fresh and attractive even to the learned. Presenting truth in the concrete, under imagery that rather suggests than fully expresses the lessons intended to be conveyed, it at once stimulates curiosity, strikes the imagination, convinces the judgment and touches the heart. The parables of Jesus are marvellous for their power of opening glimpses and vistas into regions of thought which logic cannot explore, and which human language is powerless to describe or define. Every parable is full of seed-thoughts which have a "springing and germinant power," immortal and inexhaustible. To them may be especially applied the profound words of Neander concerning the teachings of Christ in general: "Jesus would not have been the Son of God and the Son of Man, had not His words like His works, with all their adaptations to the circumstances of the times, contained some things that are inexplicable—had they not borne within

them the germs of an infinite development, reserved for future ages to unfold. It is this feature,—and all the evangelists concur in their representations of it,—which distinguishes Christ from all other teachers of men. Advance as they may, they can never reach Him; their only task need be, by taking Him more and more into their life and thought, to learn better how to bring forth the treasures that lie concealed in *Him*.*

During the last eighteen hundred years there has been a grand evolution in the interpretation of Christ's words, corresponding to the progress of reason and science in the church. But it is in this day more than ever manifest that those words contain abysses of truth, which no exegetical plummet has ever sounded; oceans which the most daring and eagle-eyed explorer has never surveyed. The latent truth enveloped in many a maxim, many a discourse, many a parable, will flash out in living light on the Christian consciousness of the ages to come. The breadth and glory of the sayings of Jesus will only be known by the illuminated millennial church.

The evangelists have left us only fragmentary and incomplete reports of our Lord's teachings. It strikes some as unaccountable that Jesus Himself did not commit His words to writing, that the truth He taught might be transmitted in integrity and perfection of form as well as of substance, to the generations following. Doubtless this was possible; and the fact that it was not done is of itself a sufficient proof that it was not, on the whole, the best and wisest thing to do. "The truth of God was not to be presented in a fixed and absolute form, but in peculiar and manifold representations, designed to complete each other; and while bearing the stamp at once of God's inspiration and man's imperfection, were to be developed

* Neander's "Life of Christ," page 102.

by the activity of free minds, in free and lively appropriation of what God had given by His Spirit.”*

As it entered thus into the plan of Christ, that a few faithful, confidential disciples should be trained for the office of witnessing to the great facts of His life and ministry, and of reporting the substance of His divine sayings, the designation and training of the *apostles* must necessarily occupy a conspicuous place in this history.

* Neander's "Life of Christ," page 100.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

THE EVANGELISTS RECORD BUT FEW OF OUR LORD'S EXTENDED DISCOURSES—THE "SERMON ON THE MOUNT," ITS GENERAL CHARACTER AND DESIGN—ITS RELATION TO THE NEW COVENANT COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE "TEN COMMANDMENTS" TO THE OLD—CONTRAST IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR COMMUNICATION AND GENERAL NATURE—THE "BEATITUDES"—THE POOR IN SPIRIT—THE PENITENT—THE MEEK—THOSE LONGING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS—THE MERCIFUL—THE PURE IN HEART—THE PEACEFUL—THE PERSECUTED—THE OPPOSITION OF ALL THIS TO PHARISAISM—THE POWER OF THESE ELEMENTS IN CHRISTIAN CHARACTER—CHRISTIANS AS THE "SALT OF THE EARTH"—CHRISTIANS AS THE "LIGHT OF THE WORLD."

It is a significant fact, that the evangelists have given us but two or three of our Lord's more extended discourses. Indeed, it is doubtful whether He ever delivered more. Doubtless the divine wisdom which was in Him saw from the beginning, that for the propagation of Christianity among the *people*, the more private, personal and direct modes of instruction were the most fit and forcible. Of these discourses, the most remarkable is the one in which He gave His first full and definite instructions to His apostles. This discourse, recorded by Matthew, and called the "Sermon on the Mount," was exclusively addressed to them, and probably in the close seclusion of His retirement to the mountain top, whither He had gone to escape the pressure of the multitude. It bears a confidential and esoteric character, quite unlike those He addressed to the people in general. It was designed to set forth

the fundamental principles of the new covenant for the guidance and use of the apostolic college. As such it claims a special and somewhat extended notice.

The Sermon on the Mount is related to the new covenant, somewhat as the law delivered by the disposition of angels from Sinai was related to the old. It was intended clearly to disclose the nature and fundamental principles of that new spiritual kingdom which Jesus came to set up, just as the Ten Commandments revealed the spirit and scope of the theocracy as founded and administered by Moses. The circumstances attending the delivery of these two grand summaries of truth, strikingly represented the difference or rather the contrast between them. Both were uttered in a "voice of words" from the summits of lofty mountains, to signify their divine and heavenly origin and their spiritual nature. The law of Sinai, however, was spoken from the midst of thick darkness and consuming flames, amidst thunderings and the noise of the trumpet waxing louder and louder, while the mountain trembled and shook. The Sermon on the Mount was spoken by the voice of a Youth, sitting in serene stillness and gentle majesty on a green eminence, in the light of a fair Galilean morning sky, surrounded with simple-hearted and joyous Galilean peasants, conscious of the fresh, divine glory which was breaking over the world. The former law was uttered in a voice of stern command, threatening death to the transgressor; the new law, though voiced with an authority all divine, breathed love and gentleness and peace. The former was written by the finger of God on tables of stone; the latter, was written, not less by the finger of God, on the hearts of those who heard it. The former was a law, accommodated in its form to the intellectual and moral condition of a childish, though not childlike people; the latter is absolute and final, setting forth the essential spiritual and

ethical principles which must regulate human society in its perfect state. The former proclaims the conditions of citizenship under a theocracy which threatened every act of transgression and disobedience with death; the latter describes that spiritual righteousness, which, notwithstanding its moral and legal imperfection, constitutes one a subject and heir of the kingdom of heaven.

When Jesus was seated He "opened His mouth," with such solemnity as was fitting the moment when He was about to loose the seal of this new "book of the law." His heart was full of divine beatitudes; and therefore His first word was "BLESSED,"—a word which may well be regarded as the symbol and key of the whole gospel:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

*"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."**

Happy are those who feel their spiritual poverty and wretchedness; who have found no satisfaction in earthly

* Matthew v 3-12.

possessions, and have not stifled the higher aspirations of their souls by earthly delights; who do not trust in their Abrahamic blood, and are not inflated with the pride of Pharisaic wisdom and righteousness; but are profoundly conscious of their spiritual wants and their utter misery.*

Happy too are all true *mourners*;—all who are conscious of their inward woe; all who are of broken and contrite heart by reason of sin, penetrated with holy grief, burdened and sorrowful in spirit because they have done evil in the sight of God, and because they *are* evil in their very nature.† All such mourners shall be comforted, though their sins be like scarlet, though they be red like crimson.‡

Happy are the meek, the gentle-spirited and lowly in heart; for they, though averse to power and dominion, shall gain possession of the earth and reign as kings upon it. “The inheritance of the earth is that world-dominion which Christians as organs of the spirit of Christ are ever more and more to obtain, as the kingdom of God shall win increasing sway over mankind and the relations of society, until, in its final consummation, the whole earth shall own its dominion; and the power which is to gain this world-dominion, is *meekness*. The quiet might of gentleness it is with which God’s kingdom is to subjugate the world.”§ Milton has happily hit the sense of this beatitude in the phrase applied to martyrs, “unresistible might of weakness.”||

Happy, continues our Lord, are all who are *hungry* and *thirsty*,—powerful epithets to describe that intense desire for true righteousness, for the bread and water of spiritual

* See Neander’s “Life of Christ,” page 225.

† Psalms li. 34.

‡ Isaiah i. 18.

§ Neander’s “Life of Christ,” pages 225, 226.

|| See Tract on “Reformation.”

life, which are only given, which *can* only be given, to those who long for them. They shall be satisfied.

Happy are those who are full of pity towards their sinful and suffering brethren, forgiving their trespasses, relieving their wants, soothing their sorrows; yea, happy are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Happy are the pure in heart. This implies an entrance into the kingdom of God already effected; righteousness already gained, spiritual comfort and satisfaction already enjoyed. Those who are in the kingdom Christ describes as "pure in heart," not however according to a legal standard, but according to a new criterion, by which the penitent and believing are adjudged and accounted morally spotless. The pure-hearted,—the regenerate,—*shall see God*; they shall have an intuitive knowledge of the divine nature, shall discern more and more the beauty of His holiness; shall enter into perfect communion with Him; shall enjoy the bliss of His living and eternal presence.

Happy are those who, thus reconciled to God, filled with His peace, and inspired with love and meekness, seek to live in concord with all men and to promote peace on the earth; they shall be called the children of God. All men will recognize in them a likeness to their Father in heaven, who maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. They are not, however, to dream that their outward lot on earth will be uniformly peaceful; for as belonging to a kingdom not of this world, a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, they will inevitably come in collision with worldly men and worldly kingdoms; and hence they must expect persecutions. Nevertheless they are still to account themselves blessed.

Happy are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy,

though derided and slandered, and pursued with implacable malice ; for even on earth the kingdom shall be theirs, and they shall have an exceeding reward in heaven.

In these few strokes Jesus delineates the kingdom of heaven. How unlike the kingdoms of this world ! How unlike that kingdom which the Pharisees were expecting their Messiah to establish ! This poverty of spirit, this holy mourning, this meek humility, this longing for inward spiritual righteousness, this compassion towards the sinful and the needy, this purity of heart, this peaceful and peace-making spirit, this joy in persecution, and this hope of a heavenly reward,—all these were utterly foreign, utterly opposed to the Pharisaic spirit.

And yet these elements of character, in the eyes of worldly sensuality, deceitfulness, pride, and ambition, so weak and contemptible, were to constitute the true strength of the Christian church ; were to exert a transforming influence on mankind throughout the ages. Possessed of these, Christians were to be *the salt of the earth, the light of the world* ;*—the source of an influence which should at once counteract the moral corruption and illuminate the darkness of the world. As it is characteristic of salt, when brought in contact with bodies which it is intended to preserve, to work secretly and silently till it has permeated the whole mass, and brought it all under its antiseptic influence ; so would the spirit of Jesus operating through His disciples, as secretly and silently penetrate the corrupt mass of human society, till every part should be reached and brought under its saving power. And as salt *which has not lost its savor*, thus brought into inward contact with all their parts, preserves from putrefaction bodies otherwise subject to speedy decay,—so the true disciples of Jesus should preserve humanity from the

moral corruption to which it so naturally, we may say so *inevitably* tends ; for such is the downward drift of human nature, that, but for the elevating influence of the higher life of the church, it would steadily sink deeper and deeper, until finally swallowed up in an abyss of utter and hopeless ruin.

Still further : possessed of these spiritual and divine elements of character, Christians are, both by their faith and works, *the light of the world*.* As it is the very nature of light, if not impeded by other and grosser elements than itself, to make its way directly and almost instantaneously everywhere, itself in its own clear and gladdening rays spontaneously revealed, and as spontaneously revealing all things else,—so it is with a true discipleship—with “pure religion and undefiled” in the heart of the followers of Jesus. It needs no struggle to make itself or its character evident to the world ; it only asks that it shall not be obstructed by gross or sensual elements in the heart or life ; give it free course, and it will be glorified. And not this only, it will reveal so clearly the character of God, the great principles of His government, and the spirit of truth and life and love in Jesus, that the gross darkness which enshrouds the world will be more and more dispelled, until at length men will glorify their “Father in heaven.”

* Matthew v. 14–16.

CHAPTER X.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT CONCLUDED.

THE RELATION OF THE NEW COVENANT TO THE OLD—ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE LAW AS PERFECTED IN THE GOSPEL—THE GOSPEL AS CONTRASTED WITH PHARISAICAL PRACTICES—THE MODEL PRAYER—THE DISCIPLES WARNED AGAINST PHARISAICAL COVETOUSNESS—AGAINST PHARISAICAL CENSORIOUSNESS—THE “GOLDEN RULE”—THE DISCIPLES WARNED AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS—IMPLICIT AND HEARTY OBEDIENCE, AS OPPOSED TO EMPTY PROFESSION AND OUTWARD FORM, THE SUBSTANCE OF TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS—THE RENDERING OF THIS OBEDIENCE TO JESUS AND HIS TEACHINGS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION—THE SUBLIME FORCE OF OUR LORD’S CLOSING LANGUAGE.

HAVING thus in a general way set forth the fundamental principles of His kingdom, portrayed the character of His subjects, declared their blessedness, and described, under striking symbols, their great mission, Jesus proceeds* to show the relation of the new covenant of which He was the Mediator, to the old covenant. He was accused by the Pharisees of being hostile to the law. The time had come for Him to declare plainly that the former covenant was not destroyed but fulfilled; was not done away, but transfigured, glorified and perpetuated in the gospel. The law in its spirit and intent, though not in its very letter, was incorporated, in a universal and absolute form, into the new law which Christ gave to His disciples, and through them to the world.

Of this grand principle Jesus gives a number of striking examples. The command, “Thou shalt not kill,” is

* Matthew v. 7-48.

carried to a loftier elevation, and made prohibitory, not only of injurious words but of angry feeling: the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is interpreted as forbidding all prurient thoughts and unchaste desires;—an extension, in each case, transparently just and necessary, since it were simply absurd to prohibit any sin, and yet give free rein to its necessary concomitants and incentives. So also the precept, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths," becomes in the law of Christ an injunction to maintain a veracity so high and unswerving that oaths and vows will be quite superfluous and even criminal. The saying, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,"—a maxim which bound the Jewish courts to punish wrongs done by individuals at the suit of the individuals wronged, is not repealed by Christ; but He restrains His disciples from claiming the infliction of the legal penalties on those who injured them, requiring them rather to suffer patiently even violence and oppression. The great command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor,"—to which the Pharisees had added what seemed to them the natural complement, "thou shalt hate thine enemy,"—is separated by Jesus from the devil's maxim thus married to the divine command, and is explained as requiring love to strangers and even enemies. It is thus lifted above all the earthliness and night of selfish and revengeful human nature, like some sublime summit, rising above the mists and vapors into the rosy light of an unclouded sun.

Our Lord, having thus set forth the distinction between the law and the gospel, and having demonstrated their essential unity, now proceeds to contrast true evangelical righteousness with the counterfeit righteousness of the Pharisees.* This contrast was, in a word, "the contrast

* Matthew vi. 1-18.

between *being* and *seeming*.”* The hypocrites did their alms to be seen of men; Christians are *not to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth*. The Pharisees prayed with many vain though high-sounding repetitions, standing at the corners of the streets; Christians are to pray in secret and in childlike simplicity. The same principle is applied to the kindred office of fasting, which should be a secret and spiritual humiliation rather than an ostentatious ceremony. As indicative of the spirit of both these exercises, and as an aid to their devotions, Jesus gives in this connection a pattern prayer, so comprehensive, so exactly suited to the wants of men in all ages and in all circumstances, that it has become the basis and substance of all Christian worship. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it.

*“Our Father which art in heaven :
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil ;
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever : Amen.”†*

Our Lord now addresses to His disciples an earnest exhortation against love of the world—against that covetous eagerness to lay up treasure on earth, which, notwithstanding the professional sanctity of the Pharisees, was a marked characteristic of the sect. Nothing could be more beautiful or impressive than the following words, spoken, as they were, to a company of Galilean peasants, whose poverty, one would think, might have justified the

* Neander's "Life of Christ," page 235.

† Matthew vi. 9-13.

most provident care to supply themselves with food and raiment:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

“The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

“No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed; (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek,) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things;

but seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”*

After this beautiful and consoling exhortation, Jesus warns the disciples against another characteristic sin of the Pharisees. While in their utter ignorance of themselves, they were self-indulgent and self-complacent, they were ready to pass the most severe and uncharitable judgments on others. This was, however, foreign to the spirit of the new kingdom. “Judge not that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye; or how wilt thou say to thy brother; Let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam that is in thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye.”†

The same principle is touched upon in the great ethical maxim:—“Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.”‡ If you would be truly righteous, “Place yourselves in the condition of others, and act towards them as you would wish them in such a case to act towards you.”§ Do this, if you would exercise the like forbearance and mercy toward others, which in the petition—“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” you desire your Father in heaven to exercise toward you.

In concluding this impressive and pregnant discourse, our Lord, knowing that the disciples would be tempted

* Matthew vi. 19–34.

† Matthew vii. 1–5.

‡ Matthew vii. 12.

§ Neander’s “Life of Christ,” p. 236.

to regard an entrance into His kingdom as difficult, if not impossible, admonishes them that the blessings offered could be obtained on no easier terms. "Enter ye," says He, "into the straight gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* Knowing, further, the dangers to which His disciples, in seeking this straight gate, would be exposed from the seductions of false teachers, Jesus lays down a test by which the character of all such persons may be tried and its real nature be infallibly determined. "Ye shall know them by their fruits."† There is a necessary connection and harmony between the faith and the works, the heart and the life, which must sooner or later evince itself. It is as necessarily so as that the foliage and fruitage of the plant must determine its order and its worth. And this beyond any possibility of deceptive change or even effective concealment. The evil hearts of these false teachers would become manifest in their evil lives and the evil effects of their doctrine. Though they might come in sheep's clothing, they would not fail eventually to betray their wolfish nature.

Indeed, the disciples were to remember that, not even under the ceremonial dispensation did outward profession or conformity answer the ends sought, but only the inward conception of the thing signified, and hearty accordance with its spirit and law. Much more must this be true of a spiritual religion like that of Jesus. No outward profession; no form of worship, no appearance of sanctity; not even the performance of mighty works, so apparently indicative of a divine presence and favor;—none of these would secure the salvation of those who did not yield a

* Matthew vii. 13, 14.

† Matthew vii. 16.

true and hearty obedience to the revealed will of God. "Not every one," says our Lord,—“not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

Having thus distinctly set forth spiritual obedience as essential to true holiness, our Lord proceeds, in a peroration of the most striking character, to declare the absolute necessity to salvation of rendering this prompt and unquestioning obedience *directly to Him and to His words*, as henceforth the supreme law of all religious life. "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."†

Brief as is this passage, it is impossible to conceive of anything more terribly explicit and energetic. Standing forth in the full majesty and power of His divine authority as the new Prophet, Priest and King, our Lord seizes upon the terrors of a tropical tempest, and with all the fervor of an oriental imagination, presses them into the service of His oratory,—a transition which, compared with the previous unimpassioned didactic character of His dis-

* Matthew vii. 21-23.

† Matthew vii. 24-27.

course, must have startled if not appalled His hearers, like a burst of thunder from a cloudless sky. We can not but believe that it revealed to them the certain presence of the Godhead in Jesus; and that it impressed upon them the awful conviction that under the new dispensation, so full of grace to the willing and obedient, to the unbelieving and rebellious, to those who should trample under foot the blood of the covenant and count it an unholy thing, there was not less near at hand than of old, a Sinai whose thunders were a voice of doom, and whose lightnings were "a consuming fire."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN.

JESUS DESCENDS TO THE PLAIN AND DELIVERS THE SERMON TO THE MULTITUDE—THE PERPLEXITY OF COMMENTATORS WITH REGARD TO THE TWO ACCOUNTS OF THE SERMON GIVEN BY MATTHEW AND LUKE—THE TRUE EXPLANATION OF THEIR APPARENT DISCREPANCIES—THE TWO EVANGELISTS CONSISTENT WITH EACH OTHER—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO SERMONS AS TO THE “BEATITUDES”—OTHER DIVERGENCIES—THESE, PROOFS THAT THE SECOND SERMON WAS DELIVERED TO THE MULTITUDE—CHRIST NOW ABOUT TO ENTER ON A NEW AND MORE IMPORTANT PHASE OF HIS MISSION.

HAVING finished the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord descended to the plain or lower plateau of the mountain, where the multitude awaited His coming. Here, according to Luke, whose statements are of the most explicit character,* He addressed the substance of the discourse to the multitude, in a more popular style and with some important variations. Commentators, from Augustine down, have been much perplexed by these variations, involving as it has appeared to them, certain discrepancies between the accounts of Matthew and Luke. A plain, intelligent reader would, however, be puzzled to find any discrepancy.

That Jesus should deliver the substance of the same discourse to different audiences on the same day, is altogether credible. To assume that He did not is to overlook

* Luke vi. 17.

the fact that He was presenting fundamental doctrine which must be communicated to all. As a Teacher of new ideas, especially as a Teacher of illiterate disciples and followers, almost constant repetition was necessary. It was thus only that His spiritual and sublime doctrines could be made clear to the understanding of His hearers, and be indelibly impressed on their memory. Doubtless, many of His most striking maxims and several of His parables were frequently repeated, and with such variations as were suggested by the immediate circumstances. This hypothesis harmonizes a large number of the alleged discrepancies.

In regard to the Sermon on the Mount, the words of the evangelists are so explicit that we can only wonder at the difficulty which so many learned writers have made rather than found in the inspired history. Matthew, always concise in the relation of facts, says that Jesus, seeing the multitude, went up into a mountain, and sitting there delivered the Sermon to the disciples. But He plainly intimates at the close that the same sayings were substantially repeated in the hearing of the people.* Luke speaks of His going up into the mountain, and there calling to Him His disciples; but he omits the more extended and esoteric discourse there delivered; recording, however, the popular version of the same, spoken by our Lord while standing with His disciples and the multitude on the plain. Surely here is no discrepancy,—not even a difficulty.

The second Sermon on the Mount differs from the first, in the omission of much that a promiscuous audience, in which were doubtless many Pharisees and cavilers, might have construed into an attack on the law, and in the amplification of certain passages of a more hortatory

* Matthew vii. 28, 29.

character. Thus we find nothing of the authoritative interpretation of the Mosaic precepts, which constitutes a principal feature of the earlier address. On the other hand, the Beatitudes,—which are much abridged,—are followed by a series of *woes*: “Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full: for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now: for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”* Thus, too, the paragraphs relating to love to enemies, and to uncharitable judging, are beautifully expanded. It is significant also that our Lord says nothing to the multitude about prayer, and He does not give them that inimitable model which He had just before given to the disciples on the Mount. The truth is, the former were not yet prepared to come to God in a filial spirit. They knew not God as their Father; how could they then address Him as such?

These variations in the Sermon on the Plain furnish indubitable internal evidence of the truth of the hypothesis adopted. To this proof may be added its brevity. Addressed to a restless multitude, more eager to witness His miracles and to be healed by His touch, than to hear His words and to be made wise unto salvation, this brevity is precisely what we should expect from the divine sagacity of Jesus, as adapting Himself to the circumstances of the case.

Having thus completed our study of these two memorable discourses, we are prepared to enter with the sacred historians upon a new period in our Lord’s ministry. He had now, in calling the apostles and giving to them these definite instructions, practically organized the new church, and put Himself before the world as the founder of a new

* Luke vi. 24–26.

religion. He had thus joined a formal issue with the old order of things and with all the existing sects connected with it. We shall therefore look for greater activity and boldness in all His operations. The church militant must now evince its radical and aggressive character, although for the present more especially represented in its Head alone.

PART VI.

Our Lord's Larger Galilean
Ministry.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS HEALS THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.

THE MULTITUDE AGAIN GATHER TO JESUS—HIS ZEAL AND ACTIVITY—
THE CENTURION—HIS AFFLICTION—HE APPEALS TO JESUS—HIS MES-
SAGE TO OUR LORD BY THE WAY—JESUS COMMENDS HIS FAITH—
HIS FAITH CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF THE NOBLEMAN OF CANA.

HAVING finished His discourse to the people, our Lord returns to Capernaum. Here the multitude, which appears to have temporarily dispersed after returning from the mountain, again assembled about Him, and doubtless in greatly increased numbers. This would naturally result from the interest excited by His recent discourse, and from the constantly widening fame of His wonderful works. Possibly also His choice of the apostles awakened an expectation that He was about to reveal Himself more openly and decisively as the Messiah. To the work of ministering to the wants of this multitude, both as it regarded teaching them and healing their sick, Jesus gave Himself with renewed devotion. Though they pressed upon Him, so that He had no time even to eat,* He neither faltered nor fell short under the excessive labors imposed upon Him. Indeed, His application to His work was so intense that His friends became alarmed for Him. To them it seemed little less than an inconsiderate, an almost

* Mark iii. 20.

insane* zeal, which must speedily result in His complete prostration.

This prodigious activity on the part of Jesus deserves special attention. It can not be doubted that, touched upon though it frequently is by the evangelists, we too often fail to form just ideas of His labors, and of the superhuman energy which He displayed. The consequence is, we see Jesus in His divine purity, gentleness and love; but our eyes are holden so that we do not behold Him in His not less wonderful industry, endurance and power. What we need to do, is to take these brief flashes of narrative, and hold them, so to speak, steadily before our minds until these wonderful scenes come before us in clear and vivid reality. We must see the multitudes thronging the house, crowding the streets,—those near at hand jostling each other; those more distant pressing closer and closer, or forcing their way through the living mass, in order to bring their sick into the presence of Jesus,—and all one hum of excitement and confusion. Amidst all this, we must see Jesus moving with unruffled serenity and confidence; never halting yet never hurried; never violent yet never borne back; hushing all to quietness and yet repelling none; speaking brief words of wisdom to every attentive listener; meeting every applicant for healing virtue with quick but quiet touch of saving power; dismissing those relieved with firm but gentle grace, in order to make room for others; and so from morning till night, meeting all, satisfying all, amazing all,—all this we must see, in order to do justice to the prodigious, the superhuman executive capacity of Jesus.

The first mighty work narrated of our Lord after His return was the following:—There was in Capernaum a

* Mark iii. 21.

Roman garrison. One of the officers of this garrison was a centurion, a man so upright, amiable and devout, that he was held in universal honor by both Jews and Gentiles. Though educated a pagan, he had by long residence among the Jews imbibed a deep love of the true religion, and had even at his own expense, built a synagogue for the worship of Jehovah. This man was just now in deep affliction. His favorite servant, who was rather a *son* than a servant to him, was sick of palsy, a disease in that hot climate often accompanied with tetanus or lock-jaw, and therefore much more painful than among us. The case was an urgent one; for the sick man was evidently past all human help.

Familiar with the teachings and the miracles of Jesus, whom he must have seen often, and entertaining for Him a feeling of the deepest veneration, it occurs to him, as he learns that Jesus is returning to the city, to apply to Him for help. "Why may I not ask Him to heal my servant? But, no: I am a Gentile sinner; I am unworthy to approach Him." He reflects, however, that though he may not personally present his request, his Jewish friends may be willing to intercede for him, and they will doubtless both have access to Jesus and influence with Him. He accordingly applies to them, and they willingly undertake his mission. As our Lord is entering the city, He is met by a deputation of elders, the friends of the centurion, who beg Him to come without delay and heal the sick servant. They press the petition on the ground of the centurion's personal worth: "He is worthy," say they, "for whom we ask it, for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue."*

Jesus, although He needed no such arguments to awaken His interest in the case, immediately proceeded with the

* Luko vii. 4, 5.

messengers towards the centurion's house. Before He reached it, however, He was met by some of the centurion's friends, who singularly enough, brought Him this message: "Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this and he doeth it."* The centurion, smitten with a sudden sense of his unworthiness, and, perhaps, fearing the presence of so holy a being, appears to have reasoned thus: "What need is there of His coming here? He can heal at a distance as well as at hand. I am under authority, yet my soldiers and servants obey me without hesitation. Jesus is supreme over all things; diseases and even demons are subject to His will. It is only necessary for Him to issue His command and the disease will obey Him, and leave my servant."

The message in its spirit of humility, in the strength of the faith it evinced, in the conception of the character of Jesus which it indicated, and in the cogency of its reasoning, was remarkable. Jesus Himself marveled at it. Turning to those who followed Him, He said: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."† In other words; In the kingdom consummated,—in its triumphant state, it is not sacred lineage nor ceremonial righteousness which will give ad-

* Luke vii. 6-8.

† Matthew viii. 10-12.

mission to the marriage supper of the Lamb, to fellowship with the general assembly and church of the first-born—*it is faith*. Hence, for their unbelief, God's once chosen people will find themselves cast out, while a multitude of those despised as Gentiles, will find full acceptance; they will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and be recognized as the true, holy seed. Among these, this humble centurion, mighty in faith, will be one of the greatest in the kingdom of God."

It is interesting to notice the contrast between the faith of this centurion and that of the nobleman of Capernaum,* spoken of in a previous chapter. The former is an example of strong faith; the latter of weak faith. The nobleman is importunate to have Jesus *go down to his house*; the centurion is convinced that if Jesus will, even at a distance, speak the word, his servant will be healed. The Gentile is overwhelmed with a sense of his unworthiness,—he is not worthy to have Jesus come under his roof;—the Jew has no such humility; he feels no such scruples. It is not strange, therefore, that Jesus rebuked the one, and commended the other. Looking at the faith of the centurion, and our Lord's approval of it, we shall have no question as to the result. The servant was healed in the self-same hour. We can hardly doubt also that both master and servant became disciples of Jesus. A faith like that of the centurion, so vigorous in its first growth, could not but ripen into full maturity and power. It is not in the nature of true faith to remain stationary and unfruitful.

*See John iv. 46-54.

CHAPTER II.

THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON AT NAIN.*

NAIN—FUNERAL OF THE WIDOW'S SON—JESUS RESTORES THE DEAD TO LIFE—NATURE OF THE MIRACLE—ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

ON the north-western slope of the "Little Hermon," are the ruins of a town still called by the natives of the region, Nain. Towards the west the ground descends abruptly to the fruitful plain of Esdraelon; and this beauty of situation is probably denoted by the name, which signifies, "The Lovely." The rocks near the entrance of the village are full of ancient sepulchral caves. It is quite certain that this is the Nain mentioned by the evangelist Luke. The name has never been forgotten. It was known to the crusaders, to Jerome and Eusebius, and to still more ancient writers.

The day after the healing of the centurion's servant, Jesus, accompanied by many of His disciples, walked from Capernaum to this little town of Nain—a distance of some eight or nine hours. If in accordance with oriental usage, He started early in the morning, He must have reached Nain at one or two o'clock in the afternoon. The route lay along the uplands which overlook the lake of Tiberias on the west, and wound around the western slope of Mount Tabor, leaving Nazareth a few miles to the right. As our Lord was climbing the steep ascent, and had almost

* Luke vii. 11-17.

reached the gate of the village, He met a funeral procession. "Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." The circumstances of the bereavement had awakened a deep and general sympathy with the solitary mourner; and it is pleasing to read that "much people of the city was with her."

There was a striking contrast between the two processions, which thus by apparent accident encountered each other. That which came from the city, clad in habiliments of mourning, proclaimed the reign of sin and death upon the earth; that which approached the gate proclaimed the resurrection and the life. Jesus, always full of pity, was deeply moved by the sorrow of the heart-broken widow, and said to her: "WEEP NOT,"—a word addressed, through her, to mourners the world over. He was conscious of that fulness of life in his own person, which should abolish death and sorrow, wrest from the grave its captives, and despoil it of its victory. So He checked, with His voice of love, the flowing tears of this lonely mourner, and kindled in her heart the hope of some great though unknown deliverance. Then He touched the open coffin,* and the majesty of His person and action caused the bearers to stand still. "And He said: Young man, I say unto thee, Arise! And he that was dead sat up and began to speak; and he delivered him to his mother." The astonishment that fell on all who witnessed this miracle was natural; and their exclamations,—“A great prophet is risen up among us!” and,—“God hath visited His people!” expressed a rational conclusion from such a resplendent proof of our Lord's superhuman power and love.

As this is the first instance of the resurrection of the

* This is the more precise meaning of the word rendered bier.

dead recorded by the evangelists, it may well be the subject of thoughtful consideration. In the first place, then, we assume that the young man was really dead. This was no case of suspended animation. Even rationalistic critics, and Strauss among them, have abandoned that hypothesis. All the circumstances of the case forbid the suspicion of mistake or collusion.

It is to be noted, however, that the young man had not long been dead; as it was the custom of the Jews to bury their dead before the going down of the sun, it is probable that but a few hours had elapsed since he had expired. There had been no *decay* of the vital organs; and the echoes of life yet lingered in their walls. There is reason to believe that the separation of soul and body is less sudden, and for a time less complete than is generally supposed. Perhaps the spirit, for a season, fondly lingers near its clay tenement. "The more deeply modern science considers, along with the undeniable distinction, the intimate connection also of spirit and matter, the less venturous appears the conjecture that the spirit, immediately after death, stands as yet in a closer connection with its scarcely abandoned dwelling-place than many are disposed to believe. This appears especially to have been the case with the dead persons whom Jesus raised. Departed in a time in which life and immortality had not yet been brought to light, they could at most only surrender themselves to death with composure, without longing after death; they were, moreover, still bound to the earth by holy bonds of blood and sympathy."* If ever a spirit was bound to earth by prayers and tears, it was that of the widow's son. And it was to the spirit that the voice of power was addressed, summoning it back to its not yet clay-cold habitation. And

* Van Oosterzee, on Luke vii. 11-17.

“there was still a thoroughly trodden way between the corpse and the spirit that had left it.”*

In suggesting this conception of the miracle, we would by no means detract from its greatness. It displayed the absolute control of Christ over all the powers of life and death; and it enables us to read in a new light His own words:—“I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen, and HAVE THE KEYS OF HELL AND OF DEATH.”†

* Lange.

† Revelation i. 18.

CHAPTER III.

MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS.

JOHN IN PRISON—HIS EXPECTATIONS WITH REGARD TO JESUS—HIS OCCASION FOR DOUBT—HIS MENTAL CONFLICTS—SUCH CONFLICTS A NECESSARY DISCIPLINE—JOHN'S MESSAGE A PROOF OF HIS FAITH—HIS MESSAGE DELIVERED TO JESUS—OUR LORD'S ANSWER—ITS SIGNIFICANCE—THE BAPTIST'S MIND SET AT REST—PRACTICAL LESSON.

OUR LORD, having completed His instructions to the Twelve, and sent them forth on their mission, resumes His teaching and preaching in the cities of Galilee. During this circuit an incident of peculiar interest occurs.

In the gloomy frontier fortress of Machærus beyond the Jordan, is a remarkable state prisoner who was arrested many months ago by Herod Antipas, ostensibly as a disturber of the peace, but really because he had the boldness to reprove that vicious prince for the sin of incest, of which he was notoriously guilty. This prisoner was John the Baptist.

We learn from Josephus that the fortress in which John was imprisoned was on a lofty mountain near the southeastern shore of the Dead Sea, on the very borders of Arabia. Almost impregnable by nature, it had been magnificently fortified by Herod the Great, and was in a condition to defy the armies of the world. Connected with the fortress was a splendid palace, where the voluptuous king often resided. Here, then, John the Baptist is confined. It was a great change for the austere preacher,

who had grown up in the free air of the desert, when he was suddenly conveyed from the banks of the Jordan, where he was surrounded with admiring multitudes, to a stern and lonely prison. It was trying to the loftiest fortitude; and though John finally came forth from the furnace like gold seven times refined, he did not escape certain agonizing spiritual conflicts, which can best be understood by those who, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, have themselves fought with Apollyon in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Let us enter his cell, and try to understand his mental agonies.

There is no doubt that the Baptist expected the speedy establishment of the kingdom of God, which he conceived of as indeed righteous and holy, yet as also outward and temporal. He looked for the manifestation and recognition of Jesus as the Heir of David. As he lay in his prison, visited occasionally by some of his disciples, he expected news that Jesus had commenced His reign and that the kingdom was restored to Israel. But this great hope, deferred month after month, made his heart sick. Rumors indeed reached him of our Lord's miracles, but he still heard of Him, not as reigning at Jerusalem, but as healing diseases and teaching among the poor people of Galilee. He must also have heard of His free and social manner of life, so different from his own severe asceticism. Perhaps this excited his surprise, and first suggested the shadow of doubt whether Jesus was, after all, the Messiah. We conjecture too, that many rumors which reached him were not authentic. It is probable that the affectionate jealousy of his disciples unconsciously colored the facts which they reported. As the weeks and months wore on, who shall say but the Baptist looked for some affectionate and comforting message from Jesus? No message came. Is he then forgotten by that "Lamb of God?" We cannot suppose that John's confidence in Jesus utterly failed;

but he began to doubt whether he had understood His mission. That He was a prophet far greater than himself, he believed; but was He the Messiah?

I picture to myself the Baptist sitting in his cell, after a visit from some of his disciples, communing with his own heart as follows:—"I verily thought that the kingdom of God would be set up ere now. Why this delay? Oh, these weary, weary months of hope deferred! When I baptized the lowly Nazarene at Bethabara, did not I hear a voice from heaven declare Him the Son of God? Did I not see that wondrous Dove descend from the open heavens and rest upon Him? After such a consecration I expected to see Him ascend the throne of David, regenerate the nation, and begin to reign in righteousness over the Gentiles. But still He tarries in Galilee, going from village to village, working many miracles, they say; but why does He not announce Himself to Israel as their long expected King? What is this doubt which pierces my heart like a dagger? What if, after all, Jesus is not the Messiah? Perhaps *His* mission is also one of preparation. But no;—I heard and bore witness that He was the Son of God. But this tormenting doubt will not fly. I *must* know: I *will* know from His own lips. I will send my most trusted disciples—who are more unbelieving than I am, and need comfort like me. I will send them to Jesus, and ask Him plainly, Art Thou the Christ or must we still look for Him?"

This determination to send to Jesus Himself, proves that John was victorious in the conflict with doubt. That he inquired of Jesus in this manner shows his state of temptation; that he inquired of none but Jesus manifests his faith in Him. The question of John is another "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." His prayer was answered by our Divine Lord in the manner best calculated to give permanent peace to the mind of the solitary,

tempted prophet. Jesus does not say to John's messengers: "Yes; I am the Christ;" but He gave such an answer as would be satisfactory to John without compromising Him with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the nation, and thus precipitating the great crisis which should put an end to His earthly mission. In the presence of John's messengers Jesus wrought many beneficent miracles, "healing many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and giving sight to many that were blind;" after which He sent back the men to their master, saying: "Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Undoubtedly our Lord conveyed to John in this message, the credentials of His Messiahship. The latter had formed a true though inadequate conception of the Messiah; he conceived of Him as a *Redeemer*, a Healer, a Comforter, a Preacher of glad tidings to the poor, of liberty to the captive, and healing to the broken-hearted. John's disciples found Jesus in the midst of His Messianic labors, among the poor and suffering, the sinful and unhappy, bearing their griefs and carrying their sicknesses, dispensing at once, with divine generosity, temporal and eternal benefits. They found Him exercising absolute dominion over the powers of nature, over the world of spirits, over the cold obstruction of the grave; and at the same time preaching the gospel to the poor. They were directed, in words of blended warning and benediction, to report these things to their master; "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." We doubt not that this blessing came to John in all its fulness.

I should like to have been there when the messengers returned. I should like to have looked into that sad

heroic soul, in which deep called unto deep, when the blessedness of a perfect faith stole over the awful billows of doubt, and they sunk away to rise no more forever. Thus, while standing by the shore of the sea whose waters were broken into foam by a tempest, have I seen the sun break forth at evening. Instantly the clouds, touched with crimson and gold, shriveled, crumbled to pieces, and melted away; the winds piped themselves to sleep; the ocean, still as a dreaming infant, glowed with gem-like hues; and "peace supreme" brooded over all. Thus it is when the calm bliss of perfect faith is imparted to the soul that has been tossed and torn by agitating doubt. Thus, we are persuaded, was it with John the Baptist. The inward tempest and trial of his soul, preparatory to his approaching martyrdom, had passed; and a heavenly tranquillity and glory were gathered about the evening of his eventful life. What matter now how soon the night might come!

Years ago I saw a picture in a foreign land, called the "Sleep of Argyle," one of the most touching and sublime I ever beheld. The duke, lying on a prison pallet, in the midst of soldiers, and in the presence of his executioner, who has come to lead him to the scaffold, is seen sleeping sweetly as an infant, his face radiant with a heavenly dream and brooded over by the peace of God. Such, I fancy, was the repose of John the Baptist, the night after the message of Jesus reached him. Such, I fancy, may have been his repose on the morning of *his* execution, for his execution is at hand. One sharp and bitter pang awaits him; but that shall be the last he shall ever feel.

It is no matter of surprise that John should have had his season of fiery trial. The Christian, like his Divine Lord, is to be made perfect through sufferings. John's mission had been one calculated to lead to self-exaltation. It was necessary that, by temporary desertion, he should

be made sensible of his weakness. In no way could this be so effectually done as by leaving his faith to its own strength;—as by opening beneath his feet the bottomless abyss of doubt, from which his soul recoiled in horror and from which he could find in himself no deliverance. There is for the mature Christian no more fearful moment of trial, than that in which his firmest conviction is shaken to its foundation, and he sees himself sliding into actual infidelity. Such times of struggle between light and darkness, between belief and unbelief, had those giants in faith, Luther and Baxter and Bunyan, and only as they encountered legions of doubt, and, in the name of Jesus, overcame and scattered them, were they perfected in faith and patience.

John's temptation, and his conduct under it, are not without their lesson to us. If this stern, incorruptible prophet, with all the miraculous evidence he had that Jesus was the Christ, was for a time staggered with doubt, need we be surprised if we are sometimes sorely beset with similar trials? There will be times when the foundations will seem to be failing. But we need not lose hope; we have help near at hand. We have only to imitate the wisdom of John, in sending to Jesus Himself for a solution of our doubts; we shall have a speedy and joyful deliverance. As doubts are usually due to our distance from Jesus, when they come upon us, let us betake ourselves to Him and they will be at once dispelled.

CHAPTER IV.

JESUS DISCOURSES UPON JOHN THE BAPTIST.

FALSE INFERENCES OF THE PEOPLE AS TO JOHN—JESUS DECLARES JOHN'S PRE-EMINENCE AS A PROPHET—HE AFFIRMS THE SUPERIORITY OF HIS FOLLOWERS TO JOHN—JESUS EXPOSES THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE POPULAR EXCITEMENT UNDER JOHN'S PREACHING—HE REBUKES THE CAPTIOUSNESS OF THE PEOPLE—THE FORCE OF HIS LANGUAGE—A GROWING HOSTILITY TO JESUS APPARENT.

THE messengers of John having taken their departure, Jesus addressed Himself to the multitude, who had been close observers of all that transpired in the remarkable interview just narrated. It would appear that some of them had drawn inferences unfavorable to the Baptist. To them it seemed that this man, once so stern and inflexible, had either become weak and vacillating, or he was beginning to see himself in error as to the Messiahship of Jesus. Such impressions could not but react unfavorably upon our Lord Himself. He, therefore, seeks to correct their erroneous conclusions.

Addressing them somewhat abruptly, He says: "But what went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"* Such he now seems to you,—weak and fickle as the reed that bends before every breeze. But how was it when you went out to him in the desert? Did he then seem so to you? "But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?"

* Luke viii. 24.

Behold they which are gorgeously appavelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts."* Surely you did not expect to see a luxurious courtier preaching repentance in the desert. You found, on the contrary, a man clothed in a garment of camel's hair, with a leathern thong about his loins; you found a rough, earnest ascetic. Think you that a few months of imprisonment have made such a man effeminate and yielding. "But what went ye out to see?—a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet." John was more than an ordinary prophet of the former dispensation; he had a high and peculiar mission, namely, to prepare the way for the manifestation of the Messiah, according to the prediction,—“Behold, I send my messenger before my face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.”†

Having thus declared John's superiority as a prophet, our Lord proceeds, while reaffirming that superiority in a more emphatic manner, to show the still higher dignity and privilege of those who were His true followers. “Among those born of women,” says he, “there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist;”—“I wish you to understand that fully, but still I would have you know that, notwithstanding that,”—“*He that is least in the kingdom of God, is greater than he.*”‡ These words are worthy of thorough study. Their peculiar significance may be seen from several points of view.

John was superior to all the prophets of the old dispensation, in the greater clearness of his views concerning the person and offices of the Messiah and the nature of His kingdom. He enjoyed also the unspeakable honor of seeing, announcing, and officially, as His forerunner, of inaugurating the Redeemer. He thus occupied an advanced stand-point; he stood on the extreme verge of the Mosaic

* Luke vii. 25.

† Malachi iii. 1.

‡ Luke vii. 28.

dispensation, and just on the glorious border of the Messianic kingdom. What more distinguished position, save that of our Lord Himself! And yet, as still conceiving of the Messiah as a temporal prince, and as looking for an outward theocracy, his views were narrow and erroneous as compared with those of the children of the kingdom, even the weakest and most ignorant. To those who are born of God, Jesus appears in a higher, clearer light as a spiritual Prophet, Priest and King, of whose divine dignity and prerogatives no temporal sovereignty, however august, could be other than a feeble and imperfect type. In this respect, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist.

Still further, there is an implied comparison between John as one "born of women," and those who are "born of God." To this latter class John did not in strictness of speech belong. It is true that in a wide and figurative sense, the saints of the old dispensation were, as having been converted by a special divine influence, born again. Yet in a stricter evangelical sense, those only are regenerated who are quickened by the Second Adam, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, which was not given till after the ascension of our Lord. There is a specialty in the new birth under the new covenant,—a partaking of the divine-human life of the Incarnate Word, which was not enjoyed by the Old Testament saints. The existence of such a superiority was expressly indicated by John himself in the words: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."* The gift of the Holy Ghost was conditioned upon the incarnation of the Word and the exaltation of the Son of Man

* Matthew iii. 11.

to the right hand of the Father. This special privilege and glory of members of the gospel church, John, though the greatest of prophets born of women, had not received. Hence, in this respect, the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he.

Our Lord now proceeds to indicate the questionable, or at least, insufficient character of the reformatory movement under John's preaching. "From the days of John until now," says he "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."*

His language is to this effect: "Since John came preaching repentance, you have been seized with a marvellous fervor and zeal; one would think you even ready to take the kingdom of heaven by violence. But whence all this new, this wonderful interest; what is its real value? The prophets and the law prophesied until John. The burden of their teaching was this same repentance and holiness. If your interest in the things of the kingdom is genuine, why was it not awakened before? But, besides this, John's ministry marks the commencement of a new epoch,—an epoch especially looked forward to and foretold by the law and the prophets, and of which the great feature was to be the coming of the Messiah. John is the prophet of this new era, the Elias who was to come. As such, his special mission is to preach the immediate coming of Christ. You run wild with excitement over John as the preacher of repentance; where is your interest in John as the forerunner of the Messiah? If you were sincere and consistent, would you not give your first and chief attention to HIM, the greater, whom it is John's

* Matthew xi. 12-15.

aim to point out to you." That this was the hidden and more profound meaning of our Lord's words, is clearly suggested by His closing remark: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;" that is, "There is more in what I say than appears on the surface; only those who listen attentively and thoughtfully will be able to get at its full meaning."

Jesus now proceeds to speak more plainly of another proof of the inconsistency of the people, and of the emptiness of all their professions. He refers to their relative treatment of Himself and John in another more exclusively personal direction. "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying: We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a devil: the Son of Man came, eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children."*

Our Lord here intimates, that the people were not actuated by a love for the truth. If they were, they would not attach so much importance to mere personal matters. The contrasted austerity of John and sociality of Jesus, were of small account compared with the great truths of the kingdom, which they were alike teaching. The fact, too, that they were thus unlike in personal manner and habit, was nothing when their doctrinal harmony was properly taken into view. But for these greater matters the people had little interest. Like querulous children at play, they only sought to be amused, and could not be satisfied unless every whim

* Matthew xi. 16-19.

was humored. Displeased with the stern asceticism of John,—a trait both natural and becoming in a prophet and reformer,—they were no better satisfied with the tender, genial humanity of Jesus, who, as was to be expected of a Divine Saviour, mingled freely with the sinful, the suffering, the lost. Wisdom would be justified of her children; but evidently this unreasonable Jewish multitude did not belong to that class.

It is quite clear from the tenor of this discourse, that a strong opposition to our Lord was already organized and led on by the very persons who secretly or openly opposed John, and that the people, although excited and curious to behold His miracles, were fast becoming infected with the skeptical, caviling spirit of their leaders. We shall find this opposition growing stronger and stronger as we approach the later portion of our Lord's life. All classes will become offended at Him; they will cast out His name as evil; they will deride His miracles; they will scoff at His preaching; they will hunt Him from place to place; they will finally crucify Him.

CHAPTER V.

JESUS FORGIVES THE WOMAN, AT SIMON'S FEAST.

OUR LORD'S FREEDOM FROM PREJUDICE—HE ATTENDS SIMON'S FEAST—
A WOMAN BATHES AND ANOINTS THE FEET OF JESUS—HER CHARAC-
TER AND CONDITION—SIMON TAKES OFFENCE—JESUS REBUKES HIM—
JESUS FORGIVES THE WOMAN—THE GUESTS CAVIL AT HIS WORDS—
PECULIARITY IN OUR LORD'S LANGUAGE—THE WOMAN DEPARTS—JESUS
CONTINUES HIS LABORS, ATTENDED BY CERTAIN WOMEN—OUR LORD'S
SPECIAL TENDERNESS TO THE FALLEN AND WRETCHED—EMPLOYMENT
OF THE WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS—THE PROPER SPHERE OF FE-
MALE PIETY.

As we have already seen, Jesus was entirely free from prejudice. In a spirit of genial humanity, He freely mingled with all classes of society. We see Him on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, equally at home among farmers and fishermen; we see Him sitting with the woman of Sychar at Jacob's Well, winning her affection and confidence by words of matchless condescension and love; we follow Him to the house of Matthew and Zaccheus, and behold Him surrounded with publicans, and scoffed at by self-righteous Pharisees as the Friend of sinners; we are about to see Him dining at the house of one of these very Pharisees.

At the conclusion of our Lord's discourse concerning John the Baptist, narrated in the preceding chapter, a Pharisee, named Simon, invited our Lord to eat with him. What was the motive which gave rise to this invitation, we are left to conjecture. Perhaps this Pharisee or some member of his family had been healed by Christ, and he

wished in this way to make some return for the benefit ; perhaps he was a social, hospitable man, who really was pleased to have his house filled with company ; or perhaps he wished to see the Nazarene in private, that he might study His character to better advantage than in the midst of an excited multitude ; or, possibly, though it is hardly probable, he was really drawn to Christ by an incipient faith and sympathy. But whatever may have been the motive, the invitation was given and accepted ; Jesus "went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat." *

The guests at this feast were all collected at the table, not sitting on chairs, according to our modern and accidental custom, but reclining on a sort of couch or carpeted platform, so that their feet lay outstretched behind them during the meal. How many guests were present on this occasion the evangelist has not told us ; but it is altogether probable that several of the disciples accompanied their Master to Simon's house. In the presence of Jesus, Simon is more honored than he knows. He is unconscious of the dignity of his Guest ; and though he means to be courteous, yet in respect to this Nazarene Carpenter and His peasant followers, he seems to think some points of etiquette may be dropped. No servant, with basin and towel, appears to wash His feet from the sand and dust of travel, and His head is not anointed with fragrant oil. Jesus notes the omission, but no sense of wounded dignity lowers upon His ever placid brow, or casts a shadow over the feast. Suddenly a female figure glides into the room. She passes on to the place where Jesus reclines, and stands behind Him. As she looks down on that serene form, her bosom is shaken with a tempest of emotion. She bursts into tears. Her tears fall like rain on the unsandaled feet before her ; and

* Luke vii. 37.

those feet are not withdrawn. She wipes them with her long, disheveled hair, and then weeps a fresh flood upon them, and again wipes them. Nay, more; with the abandonment of overflowing love, she fervently kisses those holy feet. Finally she opens an alabaster box of precious ointment, and anoints them.*

And who is she? Simon, the Pharisee, looks at her with a frown. The evangelist tells her story in a word. She was a woman of the city, and a sinner. What a tragedy is contained in these few words! Yes, this woman is a child of sin. She doubtless had a father and mother who watched with delight and hope over her sweet infancy, her prattling childhood, and maiden beauty. Perhaps she had brothers who regarded her with affectionate pride, and sisters who clung to her as a part of their own life. Perhaps she had a sweet *home* among those hills of Galilee, embowered in vines and olive trees,—a home made sweeter by her sunny smiles and maiden fancies overflowing in involuntary songs. She must have gathered round her many friends, for she had a large and loving heart. But there came a sad change. She had fallen,—oh, how low! She was now an outcast. Parents, brothers, sisters, friends—all had deserted and disowned her. She was not, it would seem, in poverty and want; she even seems to have had abundance of wealth at her command. But she was unhappy. Remorse, shame, memory, like three vultures, preyed upon her heart. She loathed herself; she loathed her manner of life. Far within her bosom, jealously guarded from human eyes, was a fountain of holy memories, and passionate yearnings for purity and peace. But she was hopeless; living on, day after day, in sullen despair.

* Many features of this description will be found to resemble an exquisitely beautiful passage by Nehemiah Adams, D. D. I read it years ago; the book is *lent*, (alas!) and I cannot refer the reader to chapter and page.

At length the day came when a stranger appeared in the city. It was said that He wrought signs and wonders, and spake as never man spake—that He even forgave sins. She will go and see Him. She beholds a young man with a countenance and bearing of such blended meekness, majesty, purity and tenderness, that she is smitten with tearful reverence. She sees His miracles; she hears His wondrous words; she knows that this is the Son of God; her pride all gives way; her hard heart breaks; faith in Jesus springs up in her soul, and peace flows in like a river. She has found the Deliverer—He is altogether lovely in her eyes, and *all* the love of her deep woman's heart, purified from everything earthly, is centered on Him forever and forever. The ice at her heart all melts away; and she goes home as on wings. But she can not rest there. She must *express* her love. But how! She at length sees Him go to the Pharisee's house, and her heart yearns to follow Him. A thought strikes her; she goes to the perfumer's. She buys his costliest box of ointment, and hastens away to the house of Simon. Trembling with mingled fear, love and joy, she comes, as we have seen, into the presence of Jesus. And now, the odor of the outpoured ointment fills the room: the woman, who has not uttered a single word, still stands behind the Saviour, and He does not repel her; but there is *one* who looks on with an unloving heart. This is Simon the Pharisee. He knows the history of this woman; and he says within himself, "This Man if He were a prophet would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him."*

Jesus knowing right well what His host was saying in his heart, and addressing Himself to his *thoughts*, said, "Simon I have somewhat to say unto thee." Simon cour-

* Luke vii. 39.

teously answered, "Master, say on." "A certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence (denarii) and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?"*—The Pharisee naturally answered, "I suppose he to whom he forgave most." O Simon, thou hast condemned thyself. Jesus turned to the woman, who had not spoken a single word since she came into the room, and said to the Pharisee, "Seest thou this woman?—I entered into thy house and thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears,"—oh, precious ablution! "My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment,"†—still more precious anointing! Simon's cold and maimed hospitality is here placed in vivid contrast with the woman's ardent and generous affection; and he was doubtless overwhelmed with shame if not with penitence in the presence of his guests.

Having thus rebuked Simon, the proud Pharisee, see how the "Friend of sinners" pours the balm of comfort into the wounded heart of the penitent at His feet. "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." Her sins had been many; and they were such as society never forgives. They had been lying on her heart for years, heavy and cold as ice. The heavens over her were of a leaden hue, the auroral brightness, "the celestial rosy-red," of life's morning having long since faded away. Cold, dark, dreary had been the heart of that poor sinner ever since the peace of innocence had flown. Now she hears from those lips that speak nothing but truth, that her sins are all forgiven. This is enough:

* Luke vii. 40, 41.

† Luke vii. 44, 46.

she desires no more. The whole current of her life is turned heavenward. She is full of peace.

But there were some sitting at the feast, who could not understand this scene; they knew not the divine dignity of Jesus. "Who is this," said they within themselves, "that forgiveth sins also?" Jesus paid no further attention to their cavils than to say to the woman: "thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." It is worthy of notice, in passing, that our Lord, in speaking of the forgiveness of the woman to the *Pharisee*, mentions only her *love*; but He tells the woman herself that her *faith* had saved her. Both sayings were true. Her faith was full of love; her love was kindled by faith. The Pharisee was cold and unloving in his heart; and therefore Jesus admonished him on that subject. The woman, dismissed with such a benediction, withdrew; and we hear no more of her. We may, however, be quite sure that her love to Jesus never grew cold, but glowed in her heart to its very last pulsation. Among the blessed saints in paradise, methinks she sings loud and sweet as any:

Love I much? I've much forgiven,
I'm a miracle of grace.

Having finished His attendance on Simon's feast, our Lord continued His missionary circuit in Galilee, going throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.* Of this circuit, the evangelist notes this peculiarity, that "the twelve were with Him, and certain women which had been healed of evil spirits, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance."† These devoted women seem to have continued with Him,

* Luke viii. 1.

† Luke viii. 2, 3.

during the whole remaining portion of His ministry; and we find them at last following Him up to Jerusalem, and standing afar off while He hung upon the cross. To them He manifested Himself first after His resurrection. Some of them were evidently persons of rank and wealth, who, with woman's self-sacrificing love and changeless faith, clung to Him when all others forsook Him.

From this portion of the sacred narrative, it will be seen how justly our Lord earned the blessed title given Him in scorn by the contemptuous Pharisees, "Friend of sinners." With what charitable reticence as to their guilt and degradation; with what meek condescension to their wants and woes, He always met them! He did not appear to the lost and ruined as the mere revealer of divine purity and justice, denouncing their sins, and hurling against them thunderbolts of reproof and threatening. This would have defeated the very end He had in view. They would have fled from Him as did Adam in the garden: He could not have converted them. He knew that He could not save them, except as He drew them to His love and service. He knew that love can only be awakened by the exhibition of a lovable object; that men are constrained almost by a necessity of their nature to love those by whom they are beloved. Hence, in His association with them, love pervaded and suffused all His words and actions. Hence, too, He came to them with glad tidings. He knew that despair was death. His voice brought life-giving hope. When He came to them with those words of grace, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,"* the weary, sullen despair which had settled down upon their hearts, like the blackness of darkness, broke away, and the sunbeams of hope fell upon the frozen fountains

* Matthew xi. 28.

of their moral affections, making their hearts all warm and fresh and green again. *Love* and *hope* are the two things necessary to a divine, redeeming hold upon the heart.

While, therefore, the sober and respectable Pharisees almost universally rejected Jesus, the publicans and harlots received Him with undissembled joy. They instinctively recognized Him as their Friend and Deliverer: they gathered about Him with confidence and love. His meekness, humility, gentleness, *humanity*,—disarmed their pride, melted their hard hearts and won them to His cause. Jesus was like a mighty loadstone to all burdened, sin-sick souls. They were drawn to Him: they found in Him their centre and their rest. Their inward yearnings after peace, pardon and redemption prepared them to understand His mission; to recognize in Him their Redeemer. Hence, the more degraded classes were the most ready to believe in Him. "Verily I say unto you," was our Lord's language to the chief priests and elders,—the representatives of the higher classes,—“the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.”*

The course of our Lord in the particular case recorded in the narrative is suggestive of a special adaptation and attractiveness in the religion of Jesus to fallen and unhappy *women*. The woman mentioned in this connection, and the woman of Samaria, who appeared earlier in our history, were simply representatives of an outcast and wretched class, many of whom were doubtless assured of forgiveness from the lips of Jesus Himself. And wherever Jesus has been truly *represented*, similar trophies of the victorious power of love have been laid at His feet. In fact, the gospel has everywhere found woman degraded and miserable, and has made her pure, free and happy.

*Matthew xxi. 31.

There seems to be a susceptibility to religious impression, a deep trust and tenderness, a yearning after purity and communion with the Saviour, in the female heart, (polluted and hardened though it be by a life of sin,) rarely found in the other sex. Let the poor outcast, at whom a selfish world points the finger of scorn, only be made to *hope*; let her be assured that there is redemption for *her*; let the Saviour be exhibited to her as *her* friend and Redeemer; and, if the last vestige of womanhood be not crushed out of her heart, she will hasten to the feet of her Deliverer with the tears of penitence and the fragrant ointment of love. Oh, we do a grievous wrong to Christ and His gospel; we limit unwarrantably the might of the Redeemer's love, when we turn away with indifference, discouragement or scorn, from the poor children of sin, for whom He died as well as for us; and for whom, while living on earth, He evinced such divine compassion. Many such are without doubt filling heaven itself with the fragrance of their precious love; and many more, through the faith and charity of the saints, shall be raised from "the horrible pit and the miry clay," to the same blessedness and glory.

Of the precise manner in which the women who followed our Lord assisted Him, we know little beyond the hint given as to their ministering to Him of their substance. But the very silence of the evangelists is expressive. No intimation is given us that the women of the gospels either acted as apostles or teachers, or coldly obtruded themselves on public notice, declaiming upon the wrongs of their sex, or delivering harangues on the affairs of state. We do find them, however, following Jesus in His journeys as His trusted, affectionate friends, listening to His gracious words, witnessing His miracles, ministering to His temporal wants, providing for Him of their substance, bathing and anointing His feet, watching

by His cross, embalming His body, and worshiping Him after His resurrection.

From this we may learn something of the proper sphere of female piety in every age. It is still the privilege of noble-hearted, faithful women to minister to Christ in His members; still the body of Christ is under their care. What they do to the least of His people or His suffering ones everywhere, they do to Him. By clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, comforting the broken-hearted, sheltering the oppressed fugitive, and sending the gospel to the destitute, they fulfill their highest mission, and secure to themselves the benediction, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."* It is by such acts of love and mercy that they pour forth on the body of Christ a precious ointment, the fragrance of which not only fills earth, but reaches to heaven.

*Matthew xxv. 40.

CHAPTER VI.

JESUS HEALS A BLIND AND DUMB DEMONIAK.

POSTURE OF THE PHARISEES TOWARDS JESUS—JESUS HEALS THE BLIND AND DUMB DEMONIAK—THE BLASPHEMING CAVIL OF THE PHARISEES—OUR LORD'S ANSWER—FORCE OF HIS LANGUAGE—THE ARGUMENTUM AD HOMINEM—ARGUMENT FROM THE ABSURDITY OF THE THING—OUR LORD REBUKES THE PHARISEES—SCRIPTURE DECLARATIONS AS TO THE UNPARDONABLE SIN—THE EFFORT TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE SCRIPTURES ON THIS POINT—THERE IS SUCH A SIN—ITS GENERAL DIRECTION—ITS GENERAL NATURE—ITS SPECIFIC ELEMENTS—CALVIN'S COMMENT—ANDREW FULLER'S VIEW — NOTHING MYSTERIOUS IN THE UNPARDONABLE SIN—GENERAL SIGNS OF REPROBATION.

THE ministry of our Lord had continued, it is thought, two full years when the incidents which are here narrated occurred. It had now become impossible to be either indifferent or neutral in respect to His extraordinary claims as a Teacher sent from God. The Pharisees, the scribes, the priests and the rulers had generally taken ground against Him; but many of the common people still adhered to Him, though the number of sincere and enlightened disciples was very small. The Pharisees were laboring assiduously to fill the popular mind with prejudice and hostility, and not without success. On the other hand our Lord was denouncing, with increasing severity, the pride and hypocrisy of that powerful sect, and this raised their opposition to a pitch of fiendish malignity. They now dogged His steps wherever He went; they lay in wait to catch Him in His words; they caviled at all His discourses; they blasphemed His miracles. This has been

seen in their conduct in relation to the miracle wrought upon the man with the withered hand.

Not long after the touching incident just narrated, another miracle was wrought, so remarkable that the enemies of Christ, not being able to deny it, and yet determined not to yield, could only blaspheme. A certain demoniac was brought to Him, who was blind and dumb. Whether this calamity was caused by his being possessed with the evil spirit, is not quite certain, though the form of expression used by Matthew would lead us to think so. However this may have been, our Lord healed the wretched creature, and he both spake and saw. This was evidently regarded by the people as a wonderful miracle; and they very naturally asked, "*Is not this the Son of David?*"* *Is not this our long-expected Messiah?* The Pharisees, some of whom had come down from Jerusalem, were alarmed. The *miracle* could not be denied; it was patent; every one might convince himself by personal inquiry of its reality; but its effect on the multitude must in some way be neutralized. The cure was real, and it was evidently wrought by supernatural agency; so much must be acknowledged; but did it, therefore, follow that it was effected by the finger of God? Might not Jesus be in league with the kingdom of evil, and might not His miracles be wrought by the aid of evil spirits? This was, in fact, the only cavil in the power of the Pharisees to offer. "This fellow," said they, "doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils."†

In reply to this objection our Lord addresses them in a discourse of mingled argumentation, reproof and warning. In the first place, He refutes the cavil by argument. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall

* Matthew xii. 23.

† Matthew xii. 24.

not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?"* The point of the argument is this:—Jesus shows them the contradictory character of their accusation. He compares a kingdom, a city, a family, in short, any social union, whatever, with the kingdom of Satan; and argues that as nothing of the kind can maintain its existence without a certain order and cleaving together of the members, so in like manner, neither can the kingdom of darkness. Or to adopt the language of Neander: "It is a contradiction in terms to suppose that good can be directly wrought by evil; that evil should be conquered by evil; that one should be freed *from* the power of the evil one, *by* the power of the evil one. Could evil thus do the works of good it would be no more evil." Our Lord assumes that the tendency of His miracles was to overthrow the kingdom of evil; that is, to deliver men both from sin and suffering. If Satan should have lent his aid to the performance of *such* miracles, he would have co-operated in the subversion of his own empire.

Next follows an *argumentum ad hominem*: "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges."† There were among the Jews themselves professional exorcists. "If such an accusation as you bring against Me, were brought against your own sons, they would pronounce it absurd. Why should you charge me with doing by the assistance of Satan, what you believe *them* to accomplish by divine power?" Thus He shows them that their charge springs from malice, and not from sincere conviction. "But," He continues, "if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."‡ The impossibility of expelling evil spirits, except

* Matthew xii. 25, 26.

† Matthew xii. 27.

‡ Matthew xii. 28.

by a superior power, is next placed in a strong light by the following illustration :—"Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first *bind* the strong man? and then will he spoil his goods."* Satan is here represented as keeping the miserable demoniac, as a strong warrior keeps a fortified palace,—for that is the figure,—who must first be overcome by a stronger, be despoiled of his armor and be bound, before his palace can be occupied and his goods enjoyed by the conqueror. Evil in the heart of man is not a mere negation,—a mere *deficiency* of light and knowledge, but a power so great and terrible that God alone can subdue it. This closes the *argumentative* part of the discourse. The Pharisees are answered.

Our Lord, now assuming that tone of authority which was proper to Him, proceeds to show their unspeakable guilt in the utterance of such blasphemies, and the terrible doom they were thereby provoking. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak a word against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."† These awful words must not be lightly passed over. They are too pregnant and momentous to be dismissed with a hasty comment.

We rightly infer from the words of Christ, that there is a sin which is *unpardonable*,—a sin of which the certain, invariable consequence is eternal perdition. This is not only declared with fearful emphasis in the text; but in many other passages of Scripture, among which the

* Matthew xii. 29.

† Matthew xii. 31, 32.

following demand special notice. In the address of Peter to Simon Magus there is a plain allusion to the unpardonable sin. "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if *perhaps* the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee."* The apostle seems to have stood in doubt whether the sorcerer had committed this sin or not. The epistle to the Hebrews abounds with warnings against it. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame."† "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace."‡ St. John speaks of the unpardonable sin as follows: "If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."§

There are commentators who attempt to eviscerate such declarations of all earnestness and terror, by softening or even reversing the meaning. They tell us that when our Lord and the apostles speak of an *impossibility* of pardon

* Acts viii. 22.

† Hebrews vi. 4, 5.

‡ Hebrews x. 26-29.

§ I. John v. 16.

and salvation in certain cases, they mean only to assert a great and *almost* insurmountable *difficulty*. But the language of Christ is too plain and unequivocal to render such a gloss tolerable;—"it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come;"—or, as Mark had it, "*he hath never forgiveness.*" Language could not be more definite and emphatic. From these passages then it is clear that there is a sin which is unpardonable; not that either the power or mercy of God is limited, or that the atonement is insufficient, but there is a limitation dictated by sovereign wisdom and righteousness. There is one *dread sin* so unspeakably malignant, that the God of infinite love will not pardon it through all the ages of eternity. There is *one sin* which no blood of atonement shall ever wash away, which no act of mercy shall ever obliterate, which shall be to the miserable sinner a clinging, eating, blasting curse through the irrevocable cycles of a lost immortality.

Our Lord's language also indicates the general direction of this sin. It is præeminently a sin against the Holy Ghost. All sin, indeed, is in some sense committed against all the persons of the Holy Trinity; but as there are some crimes *immediately* against *men*, so there are others committed *immediately* against the Father, others against the Son, and others still against the Holy Ghost. The most aggravated sin of all is that against the Holy Ghost. Sins against the Father and against the Son may be forgiven; but against the *Holy Spirit*—never.

What, now, is this fearful sin? It seems clear that it does not consist in any given act, but lies rather in the state of the heart. In the case of Simon Magus, the sin lay in the offer to *purchase with money* the power of imparting the Holy Ghost; in the case of the persons referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in apostasy from the truth; in the case of the Pharisees, it lay in their ma-

licious attributing of the miracles of Jesus to an unclean spirit. The Pharisees had seen the mighty works which Jesus wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost; they had abundant evidence of the divine nature of His miracles. Yet they deliberately, and out of mere malice, charged Him with being instigated and enabled to do all this by the power of Satan. It is true, our Lord does not say in so many words that these blaspheming Pharisees had in this, committed the unpardonable sin; but it is a necessary inference from His discourse.

We may here then erect a way-mark; so much ground has been gained; the sin against the Holy Ghost presupposes *light*; involves a *persistent opposition of will* to what is good and true and holy; and hence consists in a *malicious state of the heart*. That the blaspheming words of the Pharisees were unpardonable only because they sprung from this maliciousness of heart, is clear from what our Lord says in the same connection. "Either make the tree good and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. O, generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh."*

The language of Calvin on this point is highly instructive: "I say then that the sin against the Holy Ghost is committed by those who, though they are so overpowered by the light of divine truth, that they cannot pretend ignorance, nevertheless resist it with determined malice, merely for the sake of resisting it. For Christ in explanation of what He had asserted, immediately subjoins, 'Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.'

How *can* any one cast a reproach on the Son, that is not directed against the Spirit? Those who unadvisedly offend against the truth of God, which they know not, and who ignorantly revile Christ, but at the same time have such a disposition that they would not extinguish the divine truth if revealed to them, or utter an injurious word against Him whom they know to be the Lord's Christ,—they sin against the Father and the Son. But those who are convinced in their conscience, that it is the word of God which they reject and oppose and yet continue their opposition, they are said to blaspheme against the Spirit, because they strive against the illumination which is the fruit of the Spirit."

The following from the judicious Andrew Fuller is also in point:—"The peculiar circumstances under which any act becomes unpardonable, seem to be, the party being possessed of a certain degree of light; and that not merely *objective*, as exhibited in the Gospel; but *subjective*, as possessed by the understanding. This light which is attributed to the Holy Spirit, seems to afford the specific reason of the unpardonable sin being committed against Him. The distinction our Lord makes between blasphemy against the Son of man and against the Holy Spirit, declaring the one to be pardonable and the other to be unpardonable, seems to consist in this: the former, during His humiliation, might be the effect of ignorance and unbelief; but the latter, (imputing to Satanic influence those benevolent miracles which were not only wrought before their eyes by the Spirit of God, but which approved themselves to their consciences to be of God,) could be no other than wilful malignity. And this would be the case especially after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when such a blaze of light shone forth in confirmation of the Gospel; a blasphemous opposition to it at that period would, when the light was not only exhibited

but possessed by the understanding, be a black mark of reprobation."

To this we add the following from an excellent German commentator:—"The Redeemer had to do with persons who recognized as their calling the occupation with divine things, and who had attained a certain degree of internal, i. e. moral development. The higher this was conceived to be, the more perilous became their position, if they, notwithstanding, gave themselves up to sin. A child is incapable of blasphemy, because it has no knowledge of God; hence, it only talks at random, or utters words void of sense, because its internal nature is incapable of comprehending that which the words refer to. But the Pharisees, who bore within themselves the knowledge of divine things, and who, notwithstanding, derided and blasphemed the miracles and teachings of Christ, were guilty of the highest possible wickedness."*

It will be seen from the foregoing that there is nothing peculiarly mysterious in the unpardonable sin. All sin tends to a degree of turpitude which is unpardonable. Every man who acts against his conscience; who does violence to the sacred convictions which are produced by the illuminating power of the Spirit, is on the highway to the unspeakable crime which hath no forgiveness. By every wilful disregard of the light that is within him; by every moment of persistency in the rejection of known truth; by every act of resistance to the conscious claims of duty toward God, he brings himself nearer the final and fatal stage of reprobation. And when this course shall have been continued until the heart has attained a state of such insensibility to the truth, and malicious opposition to the Holy Spirit as its Divine Revealer, that repentance and pardon are alike impossible, the dreadful work will

* Olshausen, *in loco*.

have been done. The unpardonable sin is thus committed by every enlightened sinner, who persists in resisting the Holy Spirit until He takes His returnless departure. Those, then, are in the most imminent and appalling danger, who have enjoyed great light and have fallen into utter impiety and wickedness.

It must not be supposed, however, that those who are sealed over to reprobation are always, or indeed commonly, conscious of their state. For the comfort of tender-hearted offenders, it should be stated that, almost invariably, a deep anxiety lest one has committed the unpardonable sin is proof that he has not: such an anxiety is incompatible with the state of heart just described. Commonly, those who have thus sinned are fool-hardy, defiant, scoffers at God and the Bible and sacred things. Remorse generally does not begin to torture the doomed apostate, until, like Judas, he is about to go to his own place. He is hence likely to be the last man to feel any deep concern as to his spiritual condition or prospects.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOTHER AND THE BRETHREN OF JESUS.

TENDENCY AMONG THE DISCIPLES TO DEFECTION—FEELING OF THE RELATIONS OF JESUS—MARY—HIS “FRIENDS” READY TO CONFINED HIM AS A LUNATIC—THEY WAIT WITHOUT, DESIRING TO SPEAK WITH HIM—WHO ARE REGARDED BY JESUS AS HIS TRUE RELATIVES—JESUS DINES WITH A PHARISEE—REPROVES THE PHARISEES AND LAWYERS.

MATTHEW XII. 46-50. MARK III. 31-35. LUKE VIII. 19-21; XI. 27-54.

JESUS has reached a great crisis of His ministry. He has broken utterly with the powerful sect of Pharisees; He has openly denounced and defied them; He has exposed their hypocrisy and wickedness, and intimated that their sin is too aggravated to be forgiven; He has become the object of their implacable rage and hatred. Their influence with the people was almost unlimited; nay, one is tempted to think that they were not without influence on the disciples themselves, and even on the family of Christ. It is evident that there was, at this time, a strong tendency to doubt and defection among those who had hitherto faithfully adhered to Him. His own “friends” or relatives, some of whom, at least, had professed themselves disciples, yielded for a season to fear if not to unbelief. When they saw Him constantly surrounded with an excited multitude, when they witnessed His incessant labors which left Him no time for repose or for taking necessary food, when exaggerated reports were brought to them of His dreadful rebukes and denunciations of the

dominant sect, they began to fear that He was "beside Himself," and to meditate confining Him as a lunatic. That *Mary* was a party to this scheme is incredible. She doubtless regarded her Son's career, and especially the perils to which He was exposed, with all a mother's solicitude; but it was impossible for her to countenance any forcible interference, even to save His life. Could she forget the marvellous events which had occurred more than thirty years before? No; *Mary* did not for a moment believe that her Divine Son was "beside Himself," though it is quite possible that her concern for His personal safety may have induced her to seek an opportunity for expostulation touching His excessive and exhausting labors.

Perhaps the purpose of our Lord's friends to lay hold upon Him and remove Him by force from the scene of His perilous labors, was not so unkind as the words of the evangelist might at first glance lead us to suppose. We know how Luther was spirited away, after his appearance in the Diet at Worms, to the secure retreat of the Wartburg; and something similar may have been meditated by the brethren of Jesus. They may have thought, too, that Capernaum was no longer a promising field of labor; and that the time had come for Him to seek a refuge and another audience in some other city; for we find them not long afterwards advising Him to go into Judea and up to Jerusalem. Whatever may have been their views or their intentions, while our Lord was talking to the people, word was brought to Him that His mother and His brethren were standing without, desiring to speak with Him. Knowing well that they sought to interfere with His great work, He was undisturbed by the message, but said, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth His hand towards His disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my breth-

ren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

These wonderful words contain abysses of meaning which we cannot fathom; but we can *feel* what we do not fully understand. We cannot for a moment suppose that Jesus intended, in this utterance, to renounce natural ties or disclaim natural affection. He cherished, even to the last pulsation of His heart, a tender love to His blessed mother, committing her with his dying breath to the care of “that disciple whom He loved.” It is recorded that, after His resurrection, He appeared to James, one of His brothers.* Though what occurred in that interview is unknown, we cannot but regard it as a proof of our Lord’s attachment to one who had been His companion in the humble home at Nazareth. That He was wanting either in filial or fraternal affection can not be supposed without calling in question His moral perfection. Indeed, His language on this occasion implied that in Him those affections were peculiarly tender and strong; otherwise, what force was there in the assurance which He gave His disciples, that He regarded *them* with a love such as He bore to His brother, sister, and mother? Doubtless He intended to say more than this. He declared that His disciples were His relatives in a truer and deeper sense than those who were such only after the flesh; that they were bound to Him by ties higher and more sacred than those of consanguinity; that they were, in short, fellow-members with Him of a spiritual and immortal family—the household of a Father in heaven.

Those who would discover a still deeper meaning in these words of Christ, may study the following extract from Stier:†—“Are we to take in this sense not merely

* I. Corinthians xv. 7. † Words of the Lord Jesus, vol. 2, p. 183.

brothers and sisters, but also *mother*, as it stands at the beginning, and again with the highest emphasis at the end of the address? By all means. Whosoever receives Christ has in heart conceived and borne Him, is himself a Mary; as also Mary only thereby became and continues to be His mother. The congregation of all the brethren is collectively the true Mary, a presentiment of which profound truth forms the concealed ground of the Mariolatry of that church which exalts itself above Christ."

With what feelings the mother and brethren of Jesus met the repulse, and the tacit rebuke which He gave them, we are left to conjecture. They doubtless retired to their own home wiser than when they came. Jesus did not join them at the mid-day meal, but accepted the invitation of a Pharisee, whose house was probably at hand, to dine with him. The fact that this hospitable invitation came from *a Pharisee*, and that immediately after the terrible discourse already considered, is not a little surprising. But it is evident from what followed that the invitation was prompted by anything rather than by kindness. It was apparently the plan of these sectaries, now that He had denounced them in language so severe, to provoke Him to still more sweeping denunciations, in the hope that the rumor already started by them that He was a demoniac or a lunatic would be confirmed, and gain credence with the multitude.

Jesus without hesitation entered the Pharisee's house; for while as yet He feared no personal violence, it was His purpose to reprove, both by word and deed, the superstitious principles and customs of the sect. Accordingly He at once sat down at the table, *without having washed His hands*. As this was regarded by the Pharisees as an essential religious prerequisite to a formal meal, the omission on the part of Jesus struck His host with astonishment which he took no trouble to disguise. Doubtless

he “marvelled” aloud in a discourteous manner, “And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without, make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and behold all things are clean unto you. But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them, are not aware of them.”

When the *scribes* were thus joined with the Pharisees in this rebuke, a member of that body, called by the evangelist a *lawyer*, said to Jesus, “Master, thus saying Thou reproachest us also.” Whether this man really wished to be distinguished from the Pharisees, and exempted from the woe pronounced upon them, or whether it was his purpose to “tempt” our Lord, is uncertain. In either case, the reply which his remark elicited must have fallen upon his ears like a clap of thunder:—“Woe unto you also, ye lawyers; for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute; that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of

Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple ; verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. Woe unto you, lawyers ! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge ; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

It does not appear that any of the disciples were present at this conversation. Jesus was alone among His enemies, who attempted to provoke Him to some utterance which they might make the ground of a definite accusation. But their purpose was thwarted by His infallible insight and wisdom. His words were darts which struck to the heart and remained fixed in the wound. His rebukes were written in lines of fire on the flesh of the hypocrite. Thus a God alone can kill. Socrates but grazed the skin ; Jesus carried fire and anguish into the marrow of the bones.*

* Renan, page 285.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT TEACHER.

JESUS GOES TO THE SEA-SIDE AND TEACHES THE PEOPLE FROM A SHIP—
WHY BY PARABLES—THE CYCLE OF PARABLES TOUCHING THE ORIGIN,
GROWTH, AND CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

MATTHEW XIII. 1-52. MARK IV. 1-34. LUKE VIII. 4-18.

OUR LORD wasted no time over the noonday meal. Knowing how great a multitude awaited His coming forth, He soon withdraws from the Pharisee's house and goes to the sea-side, where He enters into a ship, and sits down to teach the people. The Sea of Galilee sleeps under a cloudless sky, unvexed by the winds which so often lash its crystal waters into fury. Jesus sees before Him the Eden-like vale of Gennesaret, with its smiling villages, its gardens and vineyards and olive groves, all shut in by lofty hills. There is an immense concourse of people, who crowd to the water's edge, eager to catch every look and word of the Great Teacher. There is a solemn hush of souls; all stand still and expectant, gazing on the saintly form in the boat. Jesus opens His mouth in parables:

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when He sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprang up because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up they were scorched; and because

they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But other fell on good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

The people know that something weighty and wonderful has been said; but even the disciples can not at once penetrate the inner meaning of the parable. We seem to see Peter and Andrew, James and John, and many others in eager conversation, and we seem to overhear the words, "What can He mean! We know what it is to sow: in yonder field is a man even now scattering the precious seed; but the Master intends to set forth something spiritual. Who is meant by the sower? What is represented by the seed? What by the different kinds of soil? What by the harvest? We cannot tell what He means; let us ask Him in private."

But the same thrilling voice again hushes the multitude to breathless silence:

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn."

Again, we cannot but picture to ourselves the people as

filled with wonder and perplexity. They knew the difference between wheat and tares: the malicious act of the "enemy," stealing into his neighbor's field while it was yet dark, and sowing it with darnel, was one which they could appreciate; the expediency of letting both wheat and darnel grow together until the harvest was sufficiently obvious; but what it all meant as a religious lesson they could not understand. They therefore determined to seek an explanation of this parable also, after the close of the public discourse. They doubtless saw that both parables turned on something spiritual represented by *the seed*, which though dry and lifeless in appearance contained a living germ, capable, under the requisite conditions, of being developed into a fruitful plant; but just what was meant by the wheat, and what by the darnel, they could only conjecture. Neither was their curiosity satisfied by the next parable, which also turned on the growth of seed:

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

The kingdom of God, then, the more enlightened hearers say to themselves, is to grow secretly, silently, gradually, from small beginnings.

Again the Divine Preacher speaks:

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

“Truly,” say the disciples, “this parable needs no interpretation. Does not the grain of mustard seed represent the present smallness and feebleness of the kingdom of God; and does not its growth into a spreading tree signify the future progress and final greatness of that kingdom?”

But hark again, to the voice of the Teacher:

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

Having spoken these four parables, Jesus dismissed the multitude. The golden light of an autumnal sunset invested the lake, the valley and the mountains, with a mellow glory; and the people, as they went to their own homes, still heard the sweet and solemn tones of that divine voice, and mused on the wonderful things they had heard. Jesus and His immediate disciples retired to a neighboring house. As soon as they were alone, the disciples came to Him and said, “Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?”*—a very natural question. Our Lord’s answer displays His matchless wisdom as a Teacher: “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they, seeing see not and hearing they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their

* That the disciples sought an explanation of *both* the parables—that of the Sower and that of the Tares—*after* the public discourse was ended, seems most probable.

eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Thus our Lord declares the principle which determined the form of His teaching. Those who were of prepared and susceptible minds should receive the truth in plain and unambiguous language; while those who were proud, obstinate and prejudiced, should be plied with dim hints and suggestions conveyed in symbols, for thus even some of them might be awakened to earnest inquiry; whereas, if the truth were declared to them in direct, didactic terms, they would at once and finally reject it. Blessed, indeed, were the disciples above the prophets and righteous men of old, in the privilege they now enjoyed of seeing with their own eyes the Divine Teacher, and seeking instruction at His lips. This privilege they now improved by asking an explanation of the parable of the sower of the seed. Our Lord's answer is worthy of careful study; it is one of the two interpretations of His own parables which have been left on record for our guidance.

"The sower soweth the word. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way-side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he no root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among thorns is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; which also bear-

eth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty."

In this parable, Jesus having spoken of the word as seed and, by implication, having compared the human mind to soil, divides the hearers of the word into three classes; first, the totally unsusceptible, represented by the hard and beaten highways where the seed does not penetrate the earth at all; secondly, the partially susceptible, represented by the stony places, in which the seed springs up quickly, but for lack of earth and moisture withers as soon, and also by the ground overgrown with thorns, in which the seed germinates and takes root but is stifled by the thorns which spring up with it; and thirdly, the good and fruitful hearers, represented by the deep, fertile, and well cultivated soil, which brings forth in due season an abundant harvest.*

Milton has said that books are not absolutely dead things but have a power and progeny of life in them. Much more truly may this be said of the word of God, which is living and powerful, and is the instrument by which dead souls are new-begotten by the will of God. But the word must first gain an entrance; it must penetrate the understanding and the heart; it must be honestly received by attentive hearing and sincere belief; it must be remembered and pondered and applied to practice. When it thus falls into good ground it will produce a plentiful harvest.

Having thus expounded the parable, Jesus reminded the disciples that they were thus enlightened that they might give light to others: "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret but it

* Neander's "Life of Christ," pp. 188, 189.

should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. Take heed what ye hear; with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."

The disciples were encouraged by these words to ask an explanation of the parable of the tares of the field. Jesus answered and said unto them: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

It is remarkable that in this parable, the good seed, the word of God, has become *regenerate persons*; and on the contrary, the *evil seed*, which must mean *error* or *falsehood*, appears as *the children of the wicked one*. These two classes represent the principles which have moulded their respective characters. "The new man," says Luther, "is, as it were, nothing but the Word of God." So the children of the devil are nothing but *a lie*—a living denial of God's truth.

Our Lord's doctrine of the last things as here declared, is as full and clear as that which was set forth in His later discourses. That good and evil, truth and falsehood, the righteous and the wicked, should be intermingled in His kingdom till the time of His second coming, and the

end of this world, is plainly foretold. And this prophetic utterance stands as a rebuke and warning against all who, under pretence of purifying the church, arrogate to themselves judicial functions, and anticipate the unerring discrimination which, at the last day, shall be made between the righteous and the wicked. "Let both grow together until the harvest," is a maxim which must be applied with signal caution; but it is one of incalculable importance.

Jesus having thus answered the questions of the disciples, added the following brief but striking parables which were so plain that they needed no explanation:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, which was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Thus closed this wonderful discourse. Anxious to remove all doubt and obscurity from the minds of the disciples, He said to them, "Have ye understood all these things?" They replied, "Yea, Lord. Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed into the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

CHAPTER IX.

JESUS STILLS THE TEMPEST AND HEALS THE DEMONIAK.

JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES CROSS THE LAKE—HE SLEEPS AND THE TEMPEST RISES—THE DISCIPLES CALL TO HIM FOR HELP—HE STILLS THE TEMPEST—JESUS LANDS AND MEETS A DEMONIAK—HIS FEARFUL CONDITION—JESUS ORDERS THE DEMON TO COME OUT OF THE MAN—THE DEMONIAK IS RESTORED TO HIS RIGHT MIND—THE GADARENES AND THEIR REQUEST—JESUS DISMISSES THE DEMONIAK TO HIS HOME—HE PUBLISHES THE MIRACLE ABROAD—THE MIRACLE MORE EASILY RIDICULED THAN DISPROVED—THIS, AND OUR LORD'S OTHER MIGHTY WORKS, DEMONSTRATE HIS UNIVERSAL DOMINION.

WHEN the day was well nigh spent, our Lord directed His disciples to pass over to the other side of the lake. After they had dismissed the multitude, they launched out in the ship from which the Saviour had preached, followed by several other little boats. Exhausted by the labors of the day, our Lord retired to the stern of the boat to catch a few moments of rest during the passage to the opposite shore, some five or six miles distant. We can almost see Him there, "asleep on a pillow," while the little vessel glides over the glassy waters. How different from the sleep of Jonah! *He* slept in mere apathy, his conscience paralyzed by sin. The sleep of Jesus is sinless and heavenly. But while there is *the peace of God* brooding over that Sleeper, there is elemental strife in the natural world. A tempest suddenly rushes down through the deep gorges of the hills which wall in the lake, and in a moment the waters are lashed into fury; the waves break in foam over the little boat, which seems about to be swal-

lowed up. The disciples, though accustomed to the sudden storms for which this lake has ever been noted, are in the utmost alarm; for it seems impossible for their little craft to live through the gale. They hope every moment that their Master will awake; but no; amidst the crash and tumult of the tempest He sleeps on, "calm and unappalled in sinless peace." At last, when the danger waxes imminent, and there seems but a step between them and death, they run to Him in haste and terror, crying: "Master, Master, carest thou not that we perish."*

Calmly He rises from His pillow, looks out upon the raging sea, and says: "Peace, be still." Will the winds and waves obey Him? They have already obeyed. In a moment the howling winds are still, the mad, leaping waves crouch under the word of power, and disappear; and the lake lies there in the purple evening, like a sea of glass mingled with fire. For there was a "*great calm*." Having thus restored the elements to peace, our Lord turns to His disciples, and reproves them for their want of faith: "Where is your faith?" Their faith had proved in this trial like "a weapon which a soldier has, but yet has mislaid and can not lay hold of in the moment of extremest need. What He rebuked was, not their appeal to Him for help, but the excess of their terror in counting it possible for the ship which bore their Lord to perish!"†

It ought to be noted, in passing, that the words "Peace, be still," can not be regarded as a mere rhetorical figure, addressed to the unconscious elements; but there is rather a distinct recognition of Satan and the powers of evil, as the authors of the discord in the outward world; a tracing up of all these disorders to their source in the Potentate of Evil, that old serpent, the Devil. The manner of the disciples is clearly indicative of this; for they appear from

* Mark iv. 38.

† Trench.

their language to have been especially affected by the appearance of Jesus as He issued the sublime command. There was probably in His look an appearance of penetrating into the invisible; and in His manner, the indications of a profound consciousness of the immediate presence of a powerful personality, malignantly disposed to rebel against His commands. No wonder, then, that the men who were in the boat "*feared* exceedingly, and said, one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him."*

The vessel had now reached the eastern shore, not far from the city of Gadara, which gives its name to the surrounding region. Hardly had Jesus landed, when a wild and haggard form was seen running towards Him. The man, if such a creature can be called a man, was entirely destitute of clothing; his hair and beard were matted and filthy, his flesh was covered with wounds and scars, his eyes red and glaring, and his whole appearance that of a hopeless, raving maniac. And such, indeed, he was. He had long been the terror of the neighborhood; for he had forsaken the habitations of the living and taken up his dwelling in a cemetery hard by, where he might be heard among the tombs, night and day, shrieking and moaning, meanwhile giving vent to his misery by cutting himself with stones and in other ways lacerating his flesh. His friends had often tried to confine him, but even chains and fetters had proved as wisps of straw to his superhuman strength. Few were bold enough to pass by the cemetery where he dwelt; his horrible cries made the blood curdle; and when his madness was at its height, it was dangerous to come into the vicinity.

This miserable creature was no common maniac. He belonged to that unhappy class, so numerous in that age,

* Mark iv. 41.

called demoniacs; he had long been under the despotic power of evil spirits; his reason was dethroned, his will directed by an irresistible agency not his own; his self-consciousness had been partially blotted out, or at least, disturbed, so that he seemed to himself to have many personalities; and his animal life was in some mysterious manner blended with the foul life of unclean demons.

Yet his self-consciousness often revived; he sometimes felt his utter ruin and misery, and longed for deliverance. At one of these lucid moments seeing Jesus stepping out of the boat, he at once recognized Him, by that strange clairvoyant power which these beings generally possessed, as the Son of God. He was smitten with awe, and perhaps at that moment a gleam of hope broke upon his dark mind. Something, it may be, whispered to his soul "the Deliverer has come;"—for he did not run *from* the Saviour but *towards* Him. And when he came nigh he *worshiped* Him. This, I suppose, was the demoniac's *own act*. It was at this moment, probably, that our Lord, seeing the wretched creature at His feet, said to the demon, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." But the spirit did not immediately obey;—perhaps a sudden and violent expulsion would have been dangerous to the poor victim,—but answered, "I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not." "What is thy name?" "My name is Legion, for we are many."

The demons, finding that their ejection was inevitable, dreading to be thrust into the *abyss*, their own proper world, and yearning after a corporeal life however gross, besought the Saviour to permit them to enter into a herd of swine, which happened to be feeding on the plain. Jesus, willing to give the demoniac a sensible evidence of his complete and permanent cure, and intending perhaps at once to punish the evil spirits and the owners of the swine, who kept them contrary to the law, gave the

desired permission. The unclean spirits then went out of the man and entered into the herd of swine. The effect was instantaneous. The brutes, affrighted by new and terrible sensations breaking down into their low, dim circle of animal consciousness, scoured madly over the plain and rushed down a precipice into the lake, where they all, to the number of two thousand, perished in the waters. That the demons foresaw this result is not at all probable; but we rather believe that the granting of their request was the very means of bringing upon them the thing they dreaded, namely, banishment into the abyss. There doubtless they are kept, under chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.

But how does it fare all this time with the demoniac? He is a demoniac no longer. In his soul, so long vexed with dire tempests, there is a *great calm*. He has come to himself. The light of reason beams once more in his eyes. He seems to have immediately sought for clothing wherewith to cover his nakedness. And now, clothed and in his right mind, where, think you, did he sit down? Where but at the feet of Jesus? He seems to have said little; but his looks were doubtless eloquent. What a steadfast gaze he fastened on his Deliverer! What tears of love and gratitude bedewed his cheeks? How he hung upon the lips of the Saviour! The healing power had penetrated his inmost soul; he was delivered from the tyranny and madness of *sin*; the peace of forgiveness entered dove-like into his conscience there to abide forever.

But he did not long enjoy the blessedness of sitting at his Deliverer's feet; a multitude of people, drawn by the report of the swine-herds, flocked out of the city and the neighboring country, to the place. When they saw the demoniac, whom they had all known, sitting at the feet of Jesus, decently clothed and in his right mind, they were not grateful for the salvation thus brought to

their suffering neighbor,—no, they were afraid for themselves and their selfish interests. The presence of such a Being as Jesus was terrible: they shrank from God manifest in the flesh. They feared also, that the destruction of the swine was the precursor of other losses. So they prayed our Lord to depart out of their coasts. *Such prayer He is wont to answer.* He immediately returned to the ship.

As He was about to step on board, the man who had been healed, prompted by love and, it may be, by the fear of a relapse into his fearful malady, begged the privilege of being allowed to follow his Benefactor. But no; Jesus has work for him to do; and work is what the man needs to perpetuate his cure. “Return to thine own house and to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”* The man had, then, a home and friends. During all the time of his madness, a father and mother, wife and children, may have been mourning for him as worse than dead. And yet if ever he visited that home, all fled from him in terror. But all this is past. Not so do they now receive him. When they see him coming, not naked, filthy, bleeding and with maniac howlings; but clothed and cleanly, with reason once more speaking in every look and action, and with words of love and greeting upon his lips, what surprise and gladness filled their hearts; and as he recounts what Jesus has done for him, there is not only gladness but gratitude in that house.

And not only there. There was wonder throughout the whole region, as he published everywhere the mighty miracle which he had experienced. We can not doubt that that miracle was his great theme ever after. He never forgot it till his heart stopped beating; nay, he did

* Luke viii. 39. Mark v. 19.

not forget it then; he has not forgotten it yet. It is perhaps now his most blessed employment to recount to every new-comer in heaven what great things the Lord did for him, that memorable evening on the Gadarene shore.

This particular miracle has been seized upon by infidels as especially vulnerable. It has been made the object of unsparing ridicule. That there should be such a thing as demoniacal possession; that men should be dispossessed by the word of Jesus; that the devils should be sent into the herd of swine;—all this is treated as matter of endless mirth. It is the natural result of a disbelief in the supernatural. The moment the existence of the supernatural is granted, while all these facts may continue inexplicable, they are no longer incredible; nay, they are the more credible because inexplicable. Now, this disbelief in the supernatural is not the normal condition of the human mind. It is the simple growth of that modern infidelity, from which the world is just awaking as from a nightmare dream. All history and all observation show that a belief in the existence and influence of the supernatural bears every mark of being a universal,—we had almost said a necessary,—instinct in the human mind. It is then for the infidel, not to scout its attendant facts, but dispassionately and conclusively to prove the fallacy of the universal instinct. Yet this is not a thing easy to be done. How is the skeptic to prove that supernatural beings have no power over men, or even over brutes? The most that he can do is to protest *his inability to see how it can be*. But this is no proof; or if it be, it will disprove a hundred things which the skeptic himself fully accepts as facts.

Passing from this, however, and looking back on the miracle as such, one reflection can not but strike every candid mind with great force. How absolute is the power

and how vast the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ! We have seen that the material elements were subject to His will: the winds and the seas obeyed Him: the brute creation recognized His authority: infirmity and disease were subject to His command: now, even the spirits or powers of the supernatural world own His supremacy. Well considered, all this appears a demonstration that, though we see Jesus passing from place to place as a man among men; subject to weariness, hunger, and other sinless weaknesses of human nature, yet He is absolute Lord of the universe: He is the WORD OF GOD, by whom all things were made, and who upholds all things by the word of His power.

Especially interesting is the thought, that, varied and vast as is this sovereign authority of Jesus, it is His great mission as Redeemer to exercise it in the behalf of sin-sick, suffering humanity. So while on earth did He exercise it. When He turned the water into wine; when He gathered the fishes into the net of the disciples; when He fed the famished multitude; when He restored the impotent man; when He hushed the tempest; when He gave sight to the blind; when He cleansed the leper; when He cast out evil spirits; when He snatched the dying from the grasp of death; when He burst open the portals of the tomb, and brought back the much lamented object of affection to the embraces of weeping friends;—all was for man's relief and blessing. And benign and wonderful as was this gracious exercise of His sovereignty, it was all only the foreshadowing of the higher manifestation of His eternal power and God-head, in saving His people from their sins. He who had this power over all things, has also power to forgive sins; to save to the uttermost those that are lost.

CHAPTER X.

JESUS AT MATTHEW'S FEAST.

JESUS RETURNS TO CAPERNAUM—HE IS FAVORABLY RECEIVED BY THE MULTITUDE—HE IS INVITED BY MATTHEW TO A FEAST—HE ATTENDS IT—THE PHARISEES TAKE OFFENCE—OUR LORD'S DEFENCE—JOHN'S DISCIPLES QUESTION HIM ABOUT FASTING.

HAVING met with so unfavorable a reception among the Gadarenes, as to render the further prosecution of His work among them difficult if not impracticable, our Lord, as we have seen, withdrew from their territory, and returned across the lake towards Capernaum. When He reached the shore He found the multitude awaiting Him. They had seen Him cross over the lake not many hours before; and it would seem, expecting His speedy return, had not yet left the place at which He had embarked. As He landed, a very different reception was given Him, from that met with among the Gadarene swine-dealers. The people received Him gladly. Some doubtless were waiting in expectation of being healed. Others, though we can hardly think their number was large, may have gained some glimpses of His true character, and were drawn to Him by secret love and confidence. The greater portion were, however, actuated by mere curiosity to behold His miracles. Possibly this feeling had received a new stimulus from the reports of the wonderful events which had taken place, on the opposite shore of the lake, and which had been brought thence by some who had

been in the "little boats" that had accompanied the one that carried Jesus thither. Attended by the multitude He returned to Capernaum, thus completing His fourth circuit in Galilee.

Soon after His return, Levi, who had been called a short time before, gave a feast to Jesus in his own house, to which he invited a great company of publicans and others. He was probably actuated by a desire to do honor to his new Master; perhaps, also, he sought to give Him a favorable opportunity of preaching to others of his own despised class. The occasion seems to have been one of no inconsiderable importance, and would seem to indicate the host to have been a man of no inferior rank. Into the festivities of the occasion, our Lord appears to have entered with His accustomed condescension and cordiality. He doubtless fully appreciated the friendly designs of His new disciple. Possibly, also, it was His purpose to show the proud and exclusive Pharisees that He was no respecter of persons, and that He looked upon their high claim to superior sanctity and privilege, with displeasure.

As might have been expected, the members of this arrogant sect were greatly incensed at the whole proceeding. At the first opportunity they broke out in open complaint and censure. "Why," said they to His disciples, (they were, as yet, too much in fear of Jesus to rebuke Him directly); "Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?"* This was to say, "Why does your Master, who claims to be so holy, defile Himself by associating with these outcasts? Why, if He is the Messiah, the King of Israel, does He thus countenance and honor the hirelings of this tyrannical heathen government, that domineers over us the chosen people."

* Luke v. 30.

Understanding the question to be,—as it was,—a virtual attack upon Himself, our Lord met it promptly and fearlessly. “They that are whole,” said He, “need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* “You, who pride yourselves upon being teachers in Israel,” said He, “show yourselves utterly ignorant both of the great objects of religion, and of the predicted character and mission of the Messiah. Your cold-blooded self-righteousness has blinded you to all the benign and merciful intentions and plans of God with reference to His lost and ruined creatures. If you need no physician, no salvation, why can you not be content that hope and help should be brought within reach of those who, according to your own admission, are so needy, the more especially as it neither detracts from your advantages nor draws upon your pity or effort?”

Soon after this feast, which may have led to the occurrence, some disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and said, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?”† The question indicates that they had already passed into a narrow and rigid formalism. Indeed, the very fact that they still called themselves John’s disciples, keeping aloof from Jesus, was a proof that they were incapable of entering into the free kingdom of God. “*We and the Pharisees*” was a sectarian phrase, which no true disciple of Christ could have uttered. Our Lord, however, deals with these narrow-minded questioners very gently, not reproving them for their illiberal prejudice and unbelief, but endeavoring to raise them up to a higher plane of thought and experience: “Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom

* Luke v. 31, 32.

† Matthew ix. 14–17. Mark ii. 18–23. Luke v. 33–39.

is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they can not fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." We can not but conjecture that these disciples of John were among those who heard the last testimony of their now imprisoned master. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."* Jesus plainly refers to these words of His forerunner; He says, in effect, "Did you not hear your master declare that I am the Bridegroom? How can my friends, those who have the care of the bride-chamber, mourn while I am with them? After my departure they will indeed mourn, and then they will naturally fast. But now, fasting would evince a lack of loving joy in my personal presence." Fasting, then, should not be a matter of law and ceremony, but should express real grief for the absence of the Divine Bridegroom, and longing for His return. In *these days*, while the Bride is piercing the heavens with the cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" the children of the bride-chamber may well fast.

Our Lord, continuing His discourse, next shows that set and frequent fasting by His disciples would, at that time, be incongruous with the new dispensation which He came to introduce. "No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred; but new wine must be put into new bottles and both are preserved." The old

* John iii. 29.

covenant, with its institutions and forms, was like an old garment, not to be mended, but laid aside. Or it was like a well worn leathern bottle which can not resist the expansive action of new fermenting wine. The new wine of Christ shatters the old ceremonialism, refuses to be contained in the ancient forms, requires fresh and appropriate rites and ordinances, and demands a free, regenerate, living church in which to mature, by ceaseless energy, its heavenly virtue.

CHAPTER XI.

JESUS RAISES THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

JAIRUS COMES TO JESUS—HIS PETITION—THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD—JAIRUS APPRISED OF HIS DAUGHTER'S DEATH—JESUS PROCEEDS TO HIS HOUSE—EXCLUDING THE MULTITUDE, HE ENTERS THE DEATH-CHAMBER—HE RESTORES THE DAMSEL TO LIFE—HE WITHDRAWS FROM THE HOUSE—TWO BLIND MEN FOLLOW HIM TO HIS ABODE—HE HEALS THEM—THEY SPREAD ABROAD THE STORY OF THEIR CURE—HE HEALS THE BLIND AND DUMB DEMONIAK.

WHILE our Lord was thus conversing with the disciples of John, a man, evidently of rank, was seen hastily making his way through the crowd, with every mark of extreme agitation and concern on his face. He was recognized by the multitude as Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue,—probably of that at Capernaum. They respectfully made room for him to approach Jesus. Whatever may have been his previous bearing toward Jesus,—for they must have met before,—there was in it now nothing of haughty distance and reserve. All his pride was merged in one great sorrow. Having at length reached our Lord's presence, he forgot his rank and dignity, and fell down at the feet of Jesus, saying; "My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hands on her and she shall live."* His petition was one calculated to awaken the liveliest sympathy. This daughter was twelve years old; she was just budding into womanhood, and was withal an only child, the

* Matthew ix. 18.

light of the household. How desolate will that dwelling be without her joyous presence; how wearily will the father's life wear on when this idol of his heart is gone! What were the feelings of Jesus, may be inferred from His action. He did not hesitate a moment: He went with the ruler immediately: The thronging multitude followed.

While He was on the way, an interesting occurrence took place, which is circumstantially narrated by three of the evangelists. Let us observe the crowd. It is an irregular procession of great extent, composed of young and old, rich and poor, male and female,—all pressing toward Jesus the central figure, trying to catch every glance of His eye and every word He utters. One figure particularly attracts our attention. It is that of a closely veiled female, exceedingly thin and emaciated, but steadily making her way through the crowd, evidently with the fixed purpose of getting near the Saviour, though moving quietly as if anxious not to attract the notice of the multitude. Who this woman is, we do not know; her name is not given. Something of her history, however, we have. She has been now for these twelve years an invalid. During this period she has spent all her property on physicians without deriving the least benefit from their prescriptions. She is now, not only prostrated by chronic disease, but she is also poor.

In her extremity this woman resorts to Jesus. She has faith that He can heal her; it would seem faith of peculiar definiteness and strength. She has somehow formed a peculiar conception of Christ's healing powers. She believes that His very body is a reservoir of health, so that it is only necessary to touch it in order to be healed: nay, she needs but touch His garment, which she regards as a conductor of the holy virtue of His person, and she will be made whole. Yet reserved and timid, she resolves to

do this by stealth, and so, as it were by chance, she approaches His person, and touches the hem or fringe of His robe. Immediately a sensation of sudden but perfect health shoots through her body; it pervades every feeling. How her heart must have throbbed with sudden joy, as "she felt in her body that she was made whole of that plague."*

The woman said not a word. In her ignorance she probably thought that Jesus Himself did not know the miracle which this stolen touch had effected. But she was soon undeceived. Jesus knew that healing power had gone out of Him; and He knew whither it had gone; for He did not work miracles unconsciously. He, however, chose for the spiritual benefit of the woman to lead her to a voluntary public acknowledgment of the cure. He, therefore, turned Himself about, and said: "Who touched Me?"† The question called forth a general denial from those near Him. Observing that his Master still looked incredulous, Peter, who already began to act as spokesman for his fellow-disciples, replied almost in a tone of reproof: "Master, the multitude throng Thee, and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?"‡ Jesus said to Him: "Somebody hath touched Me,"—not accidentally, but with a purpose,—“for I perceive that virtue (power) hath gone out of Me.”§ At these words, the woman seeing that her purpose and her cure were known, felt all further attempts at concealment to be vain. "She came trembling, and falling down at His feet, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she had been healed immediately."|| His purpose was accomplished; the open avowal of her faith and of its results was obtained.

* Mark v. 29.

† Luke viii. 45.

‡ Luke viii. 45.

§ Luke viii. 46.

|| Luke viii. 47.

“Daughter,” said Jesus, in tones of tenderness and encouragement, “be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”*

We return now to Jairus. It is not difficult to imagine his feelings at this delay. He had left his daughter lying at the point of death; every moment must have seemed to him an age. “Perhaps at this very instant,” he thought, “my darling child may be breathing her last; nay, she may even now be a lifeless corpse.” This agony of suspense was, however, soon ended; for, while Jesus was yet speaking to the woman, messengers came with the sad news that the child was dead. “Why troublest thou the Master any further?”† said they, as if now even Jesus Himself could do nothing for him. The unhappy father, smitten as with a thunderbolt, was speechless. Our Lord, knowing that his heart was sinking within him, reassured him with a word of hope; “Be not afraid, only believe.”‡

As they approached the ruler’s house, Jesus, putting back the multitude and even most of His disciples, suffered only Peter, James and John to enter the house with Him. Thus were these three apostles first singled out as enjoying the special confidence of their Master, and chosen to be witnesses of His most select and wonderful miracles. On entering the house, His ears were stunned with the horrible din of an oriental mourning. The minstrels and hired mourners were already there, and the house was full of tumult and wailing. Accosting the noisy concourse, our Lord said to them: “Why make ye this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.”§

* Luke viii. 48. According to Eusebius, an early historian of the church, this miracle was commemorated by a bronze statue in Cæsarea Pameas, representing a woman touching the hem of the Saviour’s garment.

† Mark v. 35.

‡ Mark v. 36.

§ Mark v. 39.

These words appeared so absurd to those present, that even in the midst of the wailing they laughed Jesus to scorn. The damsel sleeping? She was dead! they knew it to be so. That was precisely the testimony that He desired to elicit; for we must not understand Him as affirming absolutely that the maid was merely sleeping, as denying that she was dead; but rather as intimating that, with her, death was but a brief sleep out of which she was soon to awake. It will be remembered that on another similar occasion, when the subject of His restoring power was actually dead and buried, He said in like manner: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep."* His reasoning was then clear enough, but for the fact that unbelief had blinded His hearers to the divine character in which He spoke, and to the miracle He was about to perform.

Treating their scornful unbelief with deserved severity, Jesus at once put the noisy multitude out of the house, as altogether unfit witnesses of the approaching stupendous manifestation of the Godhead within Him. Taking with Him only the three disciples just named and the parents of the child, in the now perfect hush of the household He enters the chamber of death. They gather about the couch, and stand solemn and expectant, gazing upon the cold yet beautiful form before them. Two souls, believing and hoping, stand like funeral tapers beside the couch,—the father and the mother: His church the Lord sees represented in His three most trusted apostles. All things being now ready, Jesus takes the damsel by the hand, saying: "Maid, arise!" How divinely simple and calm yet confident, the act and word! How instantaneous and wonderful the effect! The touch and the voice of the Lord of Life vivify the marble form; the departed spirit,

* John xi. 11.

summoned back by Him who holds the keys of Hades and of Death, returns to its habitation; the heart throbs anew; the ruddy current of life once more rushes through the pale limbs, and flushes like an aurora the lovely face; the lungs heave; the eyes open, no longer glassy but beaming with life and soul; the maiden starts up on her couch, and looks around her:—she lives. What are the emotions of that father and mother? No wonder that all other thoughts are swallowed up in astonishment, and that Jesus finds it necessary to order food for the resuscitated child. Having for reasons, which have been suggested in connection with preceding portions of the narrative, charged those who had been witnesses of the miracle to keep it secret, our Lord left the house. What happy hearts He left behind Him we can easily imagine. What their communings were respecting their Benefactor, we know not. We can not, however, help feeling that they were of a most tender and grateful character.

As Jesus was returning from the house of Jairus, He was followed by two blind men who seem to have been waiting for Him in the highway. They had probably lost their sight by that terrible ophthalmia which to this day prevails so extensively in the East. Their condition was pitiable in the extreme; for there is no bodily affliction so terrible as blindness. This is especially true of those who are dependent on their labor for their daily bread. Blindness in such cases is *beggary*. Thus it probably was with the blind men who followed Jesus. Having heard of the wonderful cures wrought by our Lord, the hope had sprung up in their breasts that He would restore them. Urged on by this hope, they had persuaded some benevolent person to lead them to some place by which Jesus was to pass. As soon as they knew He was at hand, they cried out to Him: "Thou Son of

David, have mercy on us."* It is probable that they intended by this mode of address, to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. This would naturally follow from their circumstances. Their affliction had made them humble and teachable; it had taught them, also, that their only help was in Jesus. Susceptible and believing as they were, they would be among the first to acknowledge the Nazarene carpenter as the long-expected Heir of David.

Our Lord, probably with a view of testing their faith, appeared at first to take no notice of them. And so they followed Him, either led by some one who had pity on their helplessness, or else feeling their way hesitatingly along the street,—all the while, in their determination to be heard, repeating the cry: "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" At length, having followed Jesus to the house wherein He then abode,—probably the house of Matthew the publican,—they succeeded in reaching His presence. "Believe ye," said He, "that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you."† Their faith had been too well tested to leave the result in doubt. Immediately, to their unspeakable joy, their eyes were opened. No sooner had they opened their eyes and looked upon their but just now unseen Benefactor, than He charged them to let no man know it. It would have been well for them to have obeyed the injunction to the letter, since to obey is better than sacrifice. But, overwhelmed as they were with wonder and gratitude, they seem to have found that impossible. They spread abroad the fame of Jesus throughout the land. Nor do we find that their grateful loquacity was imputed to them for sin, by Him who, knowing what was in man's heart, knew full well their feelings and their motives.

* Matthew xix. 27.

† Matthew ix. 28, 29.

The words which our Lord employed in working the cure are worthy of a passing notice. This form of expression, so common with Him in the working of miracles, was doubtless intended to suggest the relation between man's faith and God's gift. Faith is that condition or exercise of the soul which brings it into communication with the divine power and good-will. It is the soul's receptivity, without which it neither can obtain the desired gift, nor be truly blessed even in obtaining it. This being so, it follows necessarily that the measure of the receptivity is the measure of the thing received; the fulness of the faith is the fulness of the blessing. He who bestows on the ground of the faith alone, must also give *according to the faith*.

As the restored blind man left the presence of Jesus, there was brought to Him a certain demoniac, who, like the one mentioned in a previous chapter, was blind and dumb. Jesus took prompt pity on the unfortunate creature, and discerning with divine insight the secret of his maladies, proceeded at once to cast out the unclean spirit that had possessed him. The blind and dumb man both spake and saw. The influence of the miracle on the beholders was widely various. The people were filled with wonder and affirmed that, "It was never so seen in Israel."* Even among those who had beheld marvellous displays of divine power, the like of such miracles had not before been witnessed. The Pharisees, however, actuated by settled hatred and hostility, although they could not deny the reality of the cure, repeated their old blaspheming taunt: "He casteth out devils through the prince of devils."† Little cared they for the suffering humanity relieved; little for the divine reality of the relief. Such is the heart of man, when left to its own evil passions.

* Matthew ix. 33.

† See Matthew xii. 24.

CHAPTER XII.

THE THEORY OF OUR LORD'S MIRACULOUS HEALING.

A PECULIARITY IN OUR LORD'S MIRACLES OF HEALING—MIRACULOUS CURES, LIKE NATURAL ONES, DEMAND A REMEDIAL AGENCY—THE REMEDIAL VIRTUE IN THE FORMER FOUND IN THE PERSON OF JESUS—NOTHING INCREDIBLE IN THE COMMUNICATION OF THIS VIRTUE BY VOLITION AND TOUCH—THE MIRACULOUS CURES OF JESUS NOT WROUGHT BY MESMERISM—THEY INVOLVE NO VIOLATION OF NATURAL LAW—THE THEORY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

As the various miracles of healing which have so far been narrated embrace some of each of the kinds wrought during later portions of His life, and are in most respects types of their kind, we may here pause to notice a peculiarity in most of them, a careful study of which may help us to a correct theory of our Lord's mode of healing. This is by no means to claim that we can fully understand these miracles,—indeed, we cannot understand how diseases are cured by natural remedies,—but we may form a conception of their mode which shall be true as far as it goes.

Every cure is effected by some remedial agency operating on the patient. This is true of a miraculous cure. Miracles are *effects* and, just like any other effects, presuppose a *cause*. When Peter's wife's mother was healed of the fever, the miracle consisted, not in her being cured without the use of any remedial agent, but in its being done by supernatural instead of natural means. Some remedial influence there was, operating on her diseased

organism, and that of a very powerful character. The same was true of the healing of the leper; of the woman with the issue of blood; the restoring of the blind men to sight; and even of the raising of the daughter of Jairus. Some real remedial agency, or vitalizing power, acted upon the bodily systems of the persons thus restored.

The question now arises, whence or what was this remedial agency or force through which these miraculous cures were wrought? The peculiarity suggested above, is in this direction highly significant. It is a noticeable fact that in so many of these miracles there was an actual contact between the body of Jesus and that of the person healed: either voluntarily or otherwise, Jesus *touched them*. In some cases, this was done with a manner expressly indicative of a connection between the touching and the healing. Thus Jesus put forth His hand and touched the leper; He touched the eyes of the blind men; and He took the daughter of Jairus by the hand. That there was such a relation between the two facts is strikingly set forth in His own words when He was touched by the woman in the crowd. He declared not only that some one had touched Him, but that in consequence of that touch, *virtue had gone out of Him*. The inference from all this is inevitable that the healing power resided in the person of Jesus; it went forth from His person to that of those miraculously restored. The exceptional cases narrated by the evangelists, only show that *contact was not necessary to a cure*; they do not invalidate the inference as to the agency which effected the cure.

What this healing agency was in its essence we do not know, but the fact of its transmission from Jesus to those restored by Him is perfectly credible. It is a familiar fact that disease can be communicated by one person to another. In the case of some diseases, communication is certain to result from contact; in some even proximity

without contact is enough. It is quite conceivable that a remedial influence may be conveyed in a similar way. Indeed, setting aside all the extravagant phenomena sometimes alleged in that direction, it is a well-established fact that, under certain conditions, one person may, by volition, and commonly through actual contact, convey a vital influence to another which shall operate on both body and mind.

This is adduced, not by any means as showing that the miracles of Jesus were wrought by a mesmeric or magnetic influence. This would fall little short of blasphemy. It is only adduced as showing that, according to our own experience, there is nothing incredible in our Lord's imparting healing virtue from His own person to the bodies of others. Endued as He was with a vitality which was superhuman,—*divine*,—the very well-spring of life was in Him. His body was, so to speak, a reservoir of life; for even in His manhood He was the Son of God, and had received of the Father to have life in Himself. His very person was therefore full of virtue, and this virtue was communicable by touch,—even by mere volition. It was so communicated, and this transmitted vitality was the remedial agency by which He cured diseases.

Nor does this involve a violation, or even a suspension of the laws of nature. It only involves the operation of a higher vital force in perfect harmony with existing forces and laws. Indeed, it is only a short-sighted vision which finds any difficulty here. The real mystery, the real *miracle* lies back of and beyond all this: it was not so much in the performing of these particular cures, as in the existence of that "virtue" or power,—of *that divine life in human flesh*, to the outcoming of which they are ascribed. Granting the incarnation, all the rest follows naturally and of course. The wonder then is, not that contact with the Son of God should heal disease, but that the Son of God should be found in fashion as a man.

The preceding train of thought is further interesting as suggestive of the true *theory* of the resurrection of the righteous. It has been seen that it was by the outcoming and imparting of vitalizing power from the person of Jesus, that the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain were restored to life. And thus will all believers be quickened;—nay, the resurrection-life has already been imparted to them. United to Christ as the branch is united to the vine, they have already been brought into this vivifying contact. The Spirit of Christ which *now* dwells in them shall quicken their mortal bodies at the last day. Those bodies have been immortalized by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and they shall not wholly, absolutely die. They die, only as dies the grain which is cast into the ground as seed; the grosser parts decay, but the true life in the germ does not perish. The holy, dead body and soul are still in vital relation with Jesus, in whom is the fountain of life, and at the appointed time they shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth to the resurrection of life.* And this idea of a vital, resurrection-force, as already imparted and dwelling within the believer, is most clearly affirmed by our Lord in the memorable words of His in the sixth chapter of John: “Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life.” The whole passage is in fact an unfolding of this very theory of the resurrection.

* John v. 28, 29.

† John vi. 48–58, in full.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER MISSIONARY CIRCUIT IN GALILEE.

NAZARETH REVISITED—JESUS AGAIN REJECTED—PREACHES AND HEALS THE SICK IN THE CITIES AND VILLAGES—HIS COMPASSION FOR THE MULTITUDE—THE APOSTLES INSTRUCTED AND SENT FORTH—JESUS RETURNS TO CAPERNAUM—TIDINGS OF THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

MATTHEW XIII. 54-58. MARK VI. 1-6. MATTHEW IX. 35-38. MARK VI. 6-13. MATTHEW X.
MARK VI. 7-11. LUKE IX. 1-5.

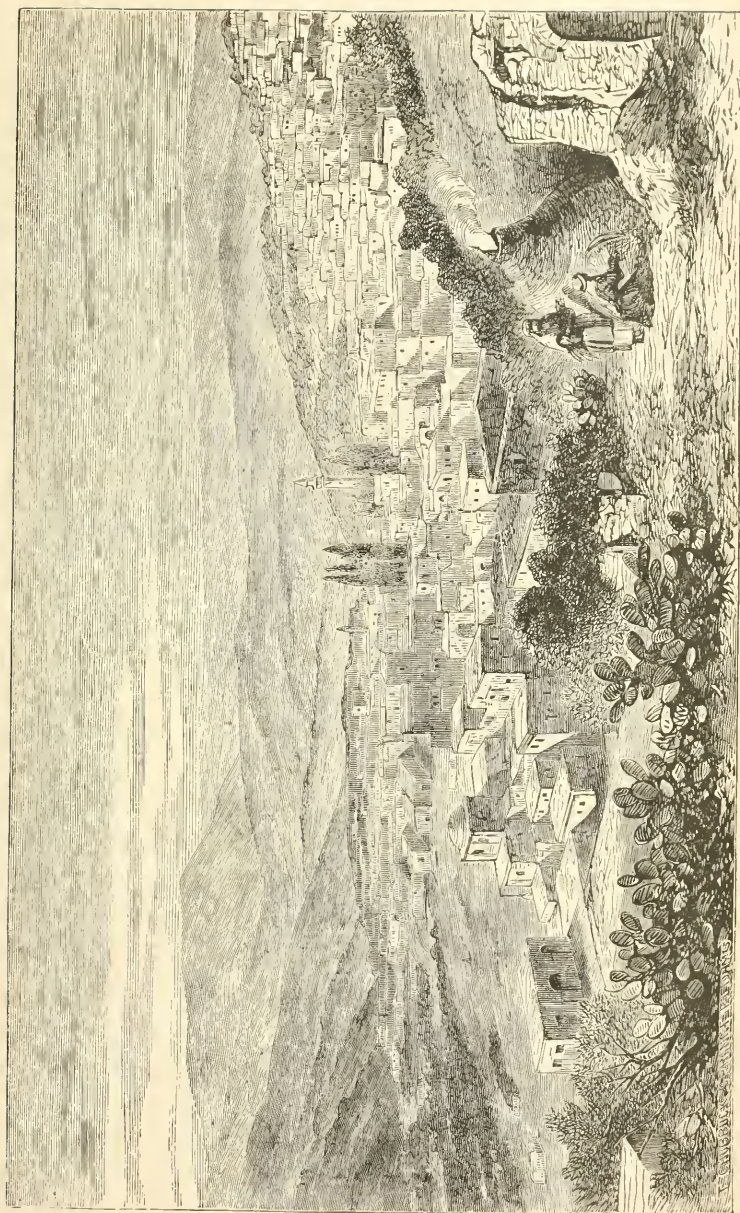
THE work of Jesus in Capernaum was well nigh accomplished. The people of that city seem to have generally taken sides, either for Him or against Him. It does not appear that many of them, subsequent to this time, became His disciples; but there was rather a strong tendency to defection among those who had professed to believe in His prophetic mission. The people of the rural districts, however, were as yet comparatively free from prejudice; and our Lord, therefore, set out on another missionary tour among the cities and villages of Galilee.

Was it in part a natural longing for the place in which He had spent the holy and peaceful days of His childhood, that led Him once more to Nazareth, whence He had once been driven as an excommunicated outlaw? It was certainly in a spirit of divine pity and long-suffering, that He again entered the town, and even went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach; but

He found the old prejudice still violent and bitter; for the people still harped on His humble condition, His laborious employment, and His lowly circle of relatives while He dwelt among them. Finding their hearts closed against Him by unbelief, He soon departed; but not before He had even there laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.

In other parts of Galilee He was received with reverence and enthusiasm. He was followed by such multitudes that He found it impossible to minister to all, either bodily relief or spiritual instruction. In their eagerness to hear and be healed, the people made inadequate provision for their physical sustenance, and many even fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Besides, amidst such a concourse and crush of people, only a few could be benefited by the personal preaching of the Lord. He therefore called His twelve apostles around Him, and gave them a special mission, designed, so to speak, to multiply Himself, and convey to all the population of the region the benefits of His personal ministry. Though their mission was limited to a small section of the Holy Land, and, at the outside, to a few weeks in duration, the general instructions under which they went forth were of much larger scope, extending, in all except unimportant details, to their whole subsequent ministry, and also setting forth the principles on which the church in every age and every country, must prosecute the work of evangelization. It is, therefore, especially important that these instructions should be carefully studied.

Where, then, were the apostles to go, and what were they to do? The field of their labors is carefully defined:—"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Let it not for



NAZARETH.

a moment be supposed that Jesus was in the slightest degree influenced by Jewish prejudice against Gentiles and Samaritans. He Himself had preached the gospel to the people of Sychar, and He had warmly commended the faith of the centurion. He had besides given many distinct intimations of the calling of the Gentiles, and the extension of His kingdom throughout the world. The true reason why the mission of the apostles was restricted to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" was an economical one. The Galileans were already prepared to receive the messengers of Christ. Their interest was already awakened; and they were predisposed to lend a willing ear to any who were understood to be the confidential disciples and messengers of Jesus. On the other hand, Gentiles and Samaritans, with here and there an exception, were so blinded by ignorance and national prejudices, that they were not prepared *at once* to understand and accept even the simple truths which the Twelve were commissioned to preach. As the business of Christ required haste, He could not afford to throw away labor on a sterile and unpromising field. The *principle* underlying this restriction is of universal application. While the gospel is to be preached to all nations, it is to be *first* proclaimed to those who are most enlightened and susceptible. Our Lord after His resurrection, while He enlarged the commission of the apostles, prescribed the same order of evangelization; "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth:"—first, in Jerusalem; next, in Samaria; and then, to the remotest Gentile nations.

With what powers were the apostles clothed? "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely

give." Their message, though plain and simple, was important and interesting. They were to announce the speedy coming of that glorious kingdom of God, for which good men and prophets had longed for ages. Whether they were to preach that Jesus Himself was the Messiah, does not appear. It seems probable that they were not as yet permitted to be thus explicit; but that they were to preach in His name, and point the people to Him as the great Prophet and Apostle of God, appears on the very face of their commission. That their authority as His ambassadors might be placed beyond question, they were empowered to work miracles. Like Him, they were to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out devils, and even to raise the dead. What miracles they actually performed is not recorded; but if they failed in any case—as they certainly did fail, not long afterwards, to heal the lunatic child,—it was because of their own unbelief, and not from any lack of endowment. It has been already intimated that their commission extended beyond this brief missionary tour, in the course of which they healed many sick and cast out many demons; and we know that after the day of Pentecost they raised the dead.

Having invested His messengers with such ample powers, Jesus sent them forth, destitute of all visible sustenance, and of all human help. "Take nothing for your journey; neither staves nor scrip, neither bread, neither money, neither have two coats apiece." "No means of any sort did He permit for procuring the necessaries of life, or purchasing the helps of their journey; no store of provisions, nor even a scrip for containing what might be offered them by the pity or piety of the people; no raiment or vesture, with the change of which to comfort their weary and way-worn limbs, besides what was sufficient for nature's modesty and her present necessity.

Without staff, without shoes, they fared on their way two by two; their sandaled feet exposed to dust and sultry heat; their bodies, to every blast of heaven; their natural wants, to man's precarious charity. The most defenseless bird that flies athwart the heavens, the weakest, most persecuted beast that cowers beneath the covert, or scuds along the plain, is better provided with visible defenses than were these apostles of the Highest; for the birds of the air have nests to which to wing their flight at eventide, and the beasts of the earth have holes wherein to screen themselves from pursuit; but the founders of the spiritual and everlasting kingdom have not where to lay their head."*

They were directed to make such haste as not even to salute any man by the way, thus avoiding that tedious interchange of conventional courtesies in which orientals have always wasted so much precious time. Lest their time should be frittered away, and their zeal should be quenched in a round of festive entertainments, they were instructed to seek out, wherever they went, those who were in repute for virtue and piety, and with them, unless they were rejected, to abide till their mission called them elsewhere.

"Thus disfurnished of resources from Nature's storehouse, and hindered from ploughing with human help, do you ask if these missionaries of the gospel had promises of welcome everywhere, and went forth on a flourishing and popular cause? if the way was prepared for them in every city, and a hospitable home made ready for them in every house? Hear what their Lord saith to them at parting: 'Go your ways; behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge

* Edward Irving's sermon before the London Missionary Society.

you in the synagogues, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake; the brother shall deliver up the brother, and the father the child, and the children shall rise up against the parents and cause them to be put to death, and ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake.' Go, my chosen ones, go like the defenseless lamb into the maw of the ravenous wolf; the world thirsteth for your blood, and is in arms against your undefended lives; nevertheless, go. You are without weapons of defense, no bribes are in your hands, nor soft words upon your tongues; and you go in the teeth of hatred, derision and rage. Nevertheless, my children, go." *

The dangers here foretold certainly did not threaten the apostles on this particular journey,—a sufficient proof that our Lord intended this commission to regulate their whole subsequent ministry. While, however, He stripped them of every earthly hope and stay, He pressed to their lips at parting a cup full to the brim of the very wine of heaven. What support and consolation could they desire which Jesus did not convey in these gracious words?—"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-

* Irving's Missionary Sermon.

law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it. He that receiveth you, receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

"Thus while He cut them off from the power and virtue of gold and silver, which, they say, will unlock barred gates and scale frowning ramparts; while He denied them the scrip, and therewith hindered the accumulation and use of property in any form; while He forbade them change of raiment, that is, pleasure and accommodation of the person; and with their staff interdicted all ease of travel and recreation of the sense by the way; and in hindering salutations hindered the formalities of life and the ends of natural or social affection; all these, the natural motives to enterprise and the sweet rewards of success, while He cut asunder as hath been said, He foresaw that whether He did so or not, the world would soon do it for them; He did not leave their minds in a void state, without inducement or hope of reward; but proceeded to fill each several chamber thereof with the spirit of a more enduring patience and a more adventurous daring; to give to faith what He took from sight; what He interdicted in the visible to supply from the invisible; what

of temporal things He spoiled them of to repay with things spiritual and eternal.”*

Having received this commission the apostles went forth, preaching that men should repent. It is noteworthy that in healing the sick they made use of *oil*—the earliest mention of *anointing in the New Testament*.

There is unwonted revelry in the palace of Machærus. Herod Antipas, with his court and army, is there, preparing to make war on Aretas, king of Arabia, the incensed father of the Tetrarch's repudiated and insulted wife. It is his birthday, and his lords and chief captains are feasting in the great hall of the palace. The splendor of the feast, which doubtless combined elaborate Roman luxury and oriental magnificence, can be better imagined than described. The wine circulates freely, the guests praise the liberality of Herod, and their honeyed flattery falls sweetly on his soul. Pleasure reigns, and the feast extends far into the night.

Suddenly a young maiden glides into the hall, and while the sweetest music floats through the place, falls into one of those graceful and voluptuous dances for which the East has been always famous. This is no vulgar artiste, no mercenary performer, but a princess, a daughter of Herodias, the grand-daughter of Herod the Great. It may be inferred from the admiration of the guests, that the dancing of the maiden was really exquisite; that it was music made visible; that it was the “poetry of motion;” that it was both graceful and impassioned; in a word, that it was an exhibition quite in keeping with the magnificence of the place, the splendor of the feast, and the rank of the company. Enthusiastic applause follows the performance. Herod, in the proud, perhaps drunken rapture of the moment, swore

* Edward Irving.

that he would give the maiden whatever she asked, even though it were the half of his kingdom.

Herodias, we conjecture, has been watching the effect of her daughter's performance; for she is at hand when the maiden retires to consult her. There is no hatred so cruel and pitiless as that of a depraved woman. There is one man whom Herodias can never forgive, and that man is in a neighboring dungeon. It is John the Baptist. She long ago determined that he should die; but the timidity of her paramour, and a little of the milk of human kindness still remaining in his nature, have hitherto prevented his yielding to her demand for vengeance on the prophet who had dared to rebuke her shameless and incestuous life. Now she knows that her time is come. Not for a moment does her cruel purpose falter, neither does she scruple to employ her own daughter as the instrument of her bloody revenge; but after giving the necessary instruction, she sends the maiden back to the banqueting hall. She enters in haste and presents herself to the king. "I will," she said, "that thou give me here, by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist." Surely, such a petition was never offered before by a young maiden to a monarch. The guests must, one would think, have heard it with horror; but courtier-like, they make no sign. As for Herod, he is sorely troubled by the strange, incredible request; but he prides himself on keeping his promises, especially when confirmed by oaths. He thinks his *honor* as a king is pledged, and so he issues the fatal order, and sends an executioner to the prison for the head of the prophet.

We know not how the Baptist met his doom. The summons was sudden; but we can not doubt that he was calm, joyous, victorious. He had at length fulfilled his course; he had fought through his great battle; and he could not die otherwise than with serene and exultant

faith. Our history merely records the fact that he was beheaded in prison, that his head was presented to the daughter of Herodias in a charger, and that she carried it to her mother. The disciples of John, hearing of his cruel death, bore his remains to the tomb and then naturally went and told Jesus. Their journey must have occupied several days, and they probably met our Lord about the time of His return to Capernaum.



PART VII.

The Later Galilean Ministry
of Jesus.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDE, AND WALKS UPON THE SEA.

SUCCESS OF OUR LORD'S EARLIER GALILEAN MINISTRY—PECULIARITY OF THE LATER MINISTRY—RETURN OF THE TWELVE—JESUS THROGGED BY THE MULTITUDE—HE SECRETLY DEPARTS TO A DESERT PLACE—THE MULTITUDE FOLLOW HIM—ANXIETY AND DOUBT OF THE APOSTLES AS TO FEEDING THE MULTITUDE—HE FEEDS THE MULTITUDE—JESUS SENDS AWAY THE DISCIPLES AND RETIRES INTO A MOUNTAIN—THE DISCIPLES OVERTAKEN BY THE STORM ON THE LAKE—JESUS GOES TO THEM, WALKING ON THE WATER—PETER'S EXPERIMENT—THE MULTITUDE GATHER TO JESUS AND HE HEALS THE SICK—GENERAL DESIGN OF THE MIRACLES.

MATTHEW XIV. 15-25. MARK VI. 31-56. LUKE IX. 10. JOHN VI. 7-15.

WE now enter upon our Lord's later Galilean ministry. The first or earlier portion was closed by the death of the Baptist, and its announcement to Jesus. It was marked by intense and unremitting activity, especially towards its termination, at which time the popularity of Jesus reached, if we may so speak, its height. It was marked by the widest exercise of His healing power; it witnessed many of His most stupendous miracles. Everywhere crowds upon crowds followed Him, or withdrawing from Him, spread everywhere the fame of His mighty works. No formal opposition had yet been developed among the people; His labors were as yet comparatively free and unimpeded.

His later Galilean ministry was marked by some peculiarities of its own. In all that looked to the recogni-

tion of Jesus by the Jewish nation as its Prince and Saviour, it was less promising. The unsparing severity with which He had rebuked and denounced the scribes and Pharisees had roused them to sleepless hostility. The clearer revelation He now made of the exclusively spiritual character of His Messianic mission perplexed and disappointed the people. The multitude, always fickle, becoming somewhat accustomed to His mighty works, were now more open to the insidious cavils and blasphemous suggestions of the Pharisees. John's mission, as the forerunner of Jesus, had come to an unsuccessful and even tragical close, the natural influence of which was to cast discredit upon the claims of our Lord Himself.

All these facts Jesus took clearly into account. Reasoning from them, He could come to but one conclusion. His own career was drawing to a close. The time was not far distant when He "must suffer many things and be set at nought." Hence, we shall find Him shaping His course to meet the changing aspect of things; not with the rash courage and bravado of a fanatic rushing headlong to His fate, but wisely avoiding a needless precipitation of the final tragedy, and assiduously laboring to put His infant church in a state of readiness for the great trial which was before it. He now withdraws Himself more and more from the public eye, and devotes Himself more especially to the apostolic training of the Twelve, and to their proper preparation for His approaching death.

Our Lord appears at the time when this portion of the sacred narrative opens, to have returned from one of His missionary circuits to Capernaum. Here, the messengers who brought the news of John's death would most naturally seek Him. Capernaum would of course be the proper place of rendezvous for the Twelve when their immediate mission had been completed. Hither at this

time they had come, perhaps hastened in their return by the eventful news of the martyrdom of the Baptist. It would not be strange if the event filled them with some apprehension for their Master's safety. Finding Him here and to all appearance as yet safe, they proceed to report their success, and to recount the various contradictory rumors which were afloat as to Jesus Himself; some of the people regarding Him as one of the old prophets, others as Elijah, and others, among whom was Herod Antipas, saying that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead.

Upon our Lord's return to Capernaum, He was, as usual, beset and thronged with multitudes. "Many were coming and going and they had no leisure so much as to eat." The concourse was, perhaps, greater because the approach of the Passover had set the great mass of the people in motion toward Jerusalem. Many companies, or caravans, no doubt improved the opportunity which this journey afforded, to stop and see the great prophet whose fame had gone abroad over the land. Of course, all privacy and repose were out of the question.

And yet both were needed. The apostles were somewhat exhausted by their recent labors; for we can not but believe that active, earnest men as they were, and with our Lord's example of indefatigable diligence before them, their labors had been most arduous. It was important, also, that opportunity should be had for giving them fresh instructions preparatory to a new mission. Jesus Himself may have felt the need of a season of solitary communion with the Father for the refreshing of His own spirit, agitated as He was by the death of John, whose bloody end doubtless foreshadowed His own.* In addition to all this, it seemed necessary for Him to withdraw from

* See "Andrews' Life of Christ," page 299.

the multitude who, grieved and exasperated by John's death, began to look to Jesus as his possible avenger.

In this state of affairs, Jesus determines to withdraw with His disciples to some secluded retreat. "Come ye yourselves apart," said He, "into a desert place and rest awhile." They accordingly took ship, and crossing the lake, sought refuge "in a desert place belonging to the city of Bethsaida," a city on the northern shore, at the entrance of the Jordan into the lake.

But although they withdrew from the multitude, and took their departure as privately as possible, they were observed and their course noticed. The news spread rapidly, and the crowd immediately started by land, around the head of the lake. They made such speed that they reached the place of our Lord's debarkation before His arrival, the vessel having been probably detained by contrary winds. Hence, when Jesus came out of the vessel, He found a vast multitude waiting to receive Him.

Presented to His view in this spontaneous movement,—so wonderful for its unanimity and promptitude,—as sheep without a shepherd, an active, earnest people without a spiritual leader, the heart of Jesus was touched with mingled admiration and pity. He willingly abandoned for the present His purpose to retire into temporary seclusion, in order that He might preach the gospel to this eager audience, and heal the diseases of their sick and suffering ones. He appears to have spent most of the day in this work.

As the afternoon wore away, it became a matter of anxiety with the apostles, how this great multitude, among whom were many women and children, were to be fed. They had in their haste come without provisions; it was a desert place, where of course nothing was to be had; and they had been detained so long by our Lord's preaching, that it was now too late for them to return to their

homes. Jesus Himself increased the perplexity of His disciples by asking Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" This was evidently intended as an intimation of what He intended to do by His divine power, but the disciples seem not to have looked upon it in that light. It doubtless appeared to them unreasonable that any idea should be entertained that they and their Master should be held responsible for the famishing condition of the multitude. Philip, who was carnal in his views, and who neither understood the power nor the purpose of Jesus, replied, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread," (forty-six dollars' worth,) "is not sufficient that every one of them may take a little." This was probably the amount of money the disciples had on hand. As this appeared so utterly insufficient to provide for the wants of the multitude, the feeling of the disciples was that it could not be done. Hence, after much anxious thought and inquiry, they came to Jesus as the evening drew on, and said to Him, "This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals." Our Lord replied; "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." The disciples were, not only perplexed, but almost irritated by these words, as we may infer from their rather impertinent answer; "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?"

It was now time for Jesus to take the matter into His own hands. It was evidently useless to attempt anything with His disciples: they could not yet get above their carnal blindness and unbelief. The purpose of their Divine Master seems not to have flashed upon their minds. Jesus, therefore, turns to them, and says,—we may imagine, somewhat abruptly:—"How many loaves have ye? go and see." Andrew replied that there was a lad present who had "five barley loaves and two small fishes;

but," said he, still persistent in unbelief, "what are they among so many?" These loaves were the usual thin cakes, such as are still eaten in the East, one of which is hardly sufficient for a single person. The lad had probably brought them with him for his own supper. They were at best but coarse food, rarely eaten even in that age, except by cattle or the lowest class of slaves. To be fed on barley bread was a punishment inflicted on Roman soldiers who deserted their standard.

Small as was the provision and inferior as was its quality, it was enough for the purpose of Him whose plan it is to accomplish great results in the use of feeble means. Jesus directed the loaves and the fishes to be brought, and commanded the people to sit down in ranks, an order convenient for the distribution of the food. The place was a pleasant one for the purpose, for it was covered with green grass, on which the people, obeying our Lord's order with singular readiness reclined themselves in companies of fifties and hundreds. Taking into His hands "the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." The distribution of the loaves and the fishes continued until all had taken "as much as they would." Nor was there any lack; for the provision multiplied under the hand of Jesus, until "They did all eat and *were filled*."

After all had partaken, our Lord directed His disciples to gather up the fragments that nothing might be lost. It would seem that each took a basket and proceeded to obey the order. When all was done it was found that there remained of the fragments of the feast *twelve baskets full*. The feelings of these disciples as they presented themselves before Jesus, with these twelve baskets full of fragments, and recalled their unbelieving doubt as to the sufficiency of the five loaves and two fishes, can easily be

imagined. Without a word of reproof from Jesus each was rebuked by the miracle which He bore in his own basket.

The multitude who were thus miraculously fed, and who numbered "about five thousand men, besides women and children," were filled with wonder. That a notable miracle had been wrought was palpable to every one of them. They were seized with a sudden conviction of the divine authority of Jesus. "This is, of a truth," said they, "that Prophet that should come into the world." Here was a Prophet; they thought, like Moses, who also fed the people in the wilderness. Full of this feeling, they even meditated making Him a king by force.

Divining their intention, our Lord constrained His disciples to enter into a ship, directing them to cross the lake towards Bethsaida. It is not improbable that He thus hurried them away in opposition to their wishes, in order to prevent their becoming infected with the wild and dangerous enthusiasm of the multitude. Having seen them depart, He dismissed the people, and "went up into a mountain apart to pray." For, though it was now night, and the day had been one of severe labor, He sought no repose in sleep. The refreshment He desired was communion with the Father. In this deep seclusion, far from the tumult of the world, He continued in devotion;—from evening till midnight, from midnight till morn, engaged in silent prayer and praise.

Meanwhile, the disciples, who had left their Master with the utmost reluctance, were in great perplexity and peril. They had been overtaken by fierce and contrary winds; the lake was boisterous; the waves were high and threatening. Fearing for the safety of their little craft, they had taken in their sail and resorted to their oars. But they made slow progress. It was now the fourth watch of the night, or near morning, and they had

only made about three miles, or half the distance across the lake, although it must have been some eight hours since they left Jesus. Doubtless the disciples, though accustomed to the sudden tempests of that treacherous lake, were somewhat alarmed. Anxiously they looked out upon the thick sky and the raging waters. When, on a former occasion, they were tossed on these angry waves, they were in extreme fear, though Jesus Himself was with them in the vessel. Now, they were alone.

Suddenly they behold a spectacle which freezes their blood with terror. Through the darkness they see a human form approaching them, over the waters; it treads the waves, as if they were solid ground; it draws near the ship; it even seems about to pass by the ship. All witness the strange spectacle; all are struck with supernatural dread, for they doubt not that it is a spirit. Nor is it strange; never had mortal eyes looked on the like before. They cry out in their terror. But, hark! there comes a well-known answering voice: "Be of good cheer: it is I: be not afraid." It is the voice of Jesus, and their terror is changed in a moment to wonder and joy.

And now, Peter must signalize his superior courage and faith. "Lord," he exclaims, "if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." Not that he doubted whether it was really the Lord. His meaning is rather: "Lord, since it is Thou, bid me come to Thee." Jesus does not say, "I bid thee come;" but rather, "Come;" "Make the experiment if thou wilt." With characteristic boldness and impetuosity, Peter immediately stepped over the side of the boat upon the water. For a moment, he was upborne by his faith; for something of true faith he had. But when he saw the wind boisterous, and the white, broken waves beneath his feet, a feeling of danger rushed upon him; he yielded to fear; he began to sink. Though he was a strong swimmer, it availed him not now; "For

there is no mingling of nature and grace in this way. He who has entered the wonder-world of grace, must not suppose that he may fall out of it, at any moment he will, and betake himself to his old resources of nature: he has foregone these, and must carry out what he has begun, or fail at his peril."* Peter could, therefore, only cry out for help; "Lord, save me!" He had thought to make a show of his courage and faith, before his fellow-disciples; but he must now in the presence of them all confess his terror and his weakness. But no one shall call on Christ in vain, even when brought into peril by his own presumption and unbelief. Peter found a strong hand stretched forth to snatch him from a watery grave. "O, thou of little faith; wherefore didst thou doubt?" "Why did you cease to trust in Me? So long as you kept yourself in communication with Me by faith, you were safe." Saying this, Jesus entered, with the humbled apostle, into the ship, and immediately the wind ceased. Ah, had we been there, should we not have done as did all in the vessel; should we not have fallen at His feet and worshiped Him, saying: "Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God?"

Soon after, they^e reached the western shore, to which they were bound. Our Lord's presence becoming speedily known to the men of the place, they not only spread the news abroad, but even took pains to collect and bring together the sick of the surrounding country that they might be healed by Him. "They sent out," says the evangelist, "into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased, and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment." It would seem also that, not content with bringing them to Him, they followed Him as He proceeded on His journey;

* Trench "On Miracles," page 223.

“For they began to carry *about* in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was.” Of these sick, multitudes were healed; many by the simple life-giving contact which, as has already been seen, was so efficacious in the case of the woman with the issue of blood. “As many as touched Him were made whole.”

The general design of these miracles is obvious. They were doubtless intended, primarily, to strengthen the faith of the apostles who had been so recently, for a season, separated from their Master. They needed a fresh demonstration of His power to protect and provide for them; they needed new proof of His faithful, vigilant care even when He was absent from them. Above all, it was intended, by such repeated outcomings of His divine power and glory, to enlarge and elevate their conception of His person and office.

These miracles of our Lord had, moreover, a still wider scope and significance. They had a high symbolical meaning; they were, in fact, acted parables. In regard to the first, this is beyond question; for our Lord Himself has, as we shall see, fully set forth its symbolical meaning. Taking the hint from His exposition of the first miracle, it is not difficult for us to trace out the full force of the other. Both will appear in their proper place in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE IN CAPERNAUM.

JESUS REBUKES THE MULTITUDE FOR THEIR SELFISHNESS—HE DECLARES HIMSELF THE LIVING BREAD—THE SYMBOLICAL MEANING OF THE MIRACLE OF FEEDING THE MULTITUDE—SYMBOLICAL MEANING OF THE MIRACLE OF WALKING ON THE SEA AND STILLING THE TEMPEST—THE EFFECT PRODUCED UPON THE JEWS BY OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE—DISAFFECTION OF SOME OF HIS DISCIPLES—HE FOREWARNS THEM OF GREATER TRIALS OF THEIR FAITH—PETER'S CONFESSION—THE PHARISEES COMPLAIN TO JESUS OF HIS DISCIPLES—HE UNMASKS THEIR HYPOCRISY—HE SETS FORTH THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF RELIGIOUS PURITY.

JOHN VI. 22-66. MATTHEW XV. 1-20. MARK VII. 1-22.

THE multitude, having been sent away by our Lord at night-fall, after the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, appear to have remained in the neighborhood. Observing "that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat," they seem to have expected to find Him, on the following day, somewhere in the vicinity. Disappointed in this, they took boats, and crossing the lake, sought for Him. They at length found Him at Capernaum. This appears to have occasioned them some surprise, for they immediately inquired of Him: "Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?"

Without answering their question, He proceeded to rebuke them for their mercenary motives in seeking Him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," was His language, "ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for

the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed." He had given them bread to nourish their bodies; He had thus ministered to their temporal life; now He intimates that He can give them food which will impart life spiritual and everlasting.

This grand truth He soon takes occasion to enunciate fully. The people require of Him, in attestation of His divine authority, a new and still more mighty miracle, such as was wrought by Moses in the desert when he fed their fathers with manna. Jesus, in reply, denies that *Moses* gave the people bread from *heaven*. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day; for My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

It is hardly necessary to suggest here, that this passage

is one of the most important in the New Testament. Its meaning has been a matter of dispute in the church for ages. The general truth, that Christ, by His incarnation, death and mediation, has imparted spiritual life to a dead world, lies upon the surface. As natural bread, when eaten and assimilated, is the means of perpetuating bodily life, so Christ, received by faith, is the means, or rather the *cause*, of spiritual life. He is the *cause*; for the reason that there is this difference between Christ and natural bread: the latter has no life in itself to impart to a dead subject, but must be assimilated by a living organism; Christ, on the other hand, is "living bread," quickening and assimilating the *subject* who receives Him. Those who receive His flesh and blood *pass into His body*, and become His living members. In giving Himself to the world, then, Christ imparts to men His own nature, His life, His spirit; and in doing this, He assimilates them to Himself; they dwell in Him; they become one with Him.

We are now prepared to see the symbolical force of the miracle of feeding the multitude. When Christ came from the Father into the world, He found the human family wandering in the desert of sin, as sheep having no shepherd; and He pitied them, and purposed in His gracious heart to provide them bread. As they wandered up and down, finding nought to satisfy their soul-hunger, craving life, longing for immortality, crying out for peace and salvation, suddenly they heard a mighty voice, saying to them, "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; he that believeth on Me shall never thirst;" and as many as came, cried out in rapture: "Oh taste and see that the Lord is gracious." Jesus spreads a feast for mankind in the wilderness of this world, as He spread one for the multitude in the desert place. And as He brake the loaves and the fishes,

and breaking, multiplied them until there was "bread enough and to spare;" so also brake He His own body on the tree, and breaking, multiplied it as the "Bread of God," so that there is a sufficiency for all: whosoever will may come and partake freely, "without money and without price."

Turning now to the other miracle, that of walking on the sea, and stilling the tempest, we shall find it also, as a symbol, full of instruction and comfort. That lonely ship on the wild, tempestuous sea, struggling in the darkness with waves which seem about to engulf it, is the church which the Master has launched upon the billows of time. Amidst all its perils, He watches over it from the mount of God, whither He has gone to make intercession for us. We see Him not; but He never loses sight of us. In the hour of distress and danger, when exhausted and ready to perish, He comes to us, walking serenely on the tempestuous sea. At first we do not perceive Him to be our Deliverer, and we cry out in dismay, as at the approach of a new and greater peril. Then, by His Spirit, He makes Himself known: He comes Himself on board and stills the tempest, and immediately all is peace, and we are safely at the land.

Is not this the history of the church hitherto? Has she not been tempest-tossed and wave-beaten for these eighteen hundred years. During the storm of persecution, and the dread night of apostasy, when the clouds veiled the heavens and darkness covered the earth, she labored painfully among the surges, but she did not sink. Never did her Divine Lord fail to watch over her, or to come to her, at the fourth watch of the night, calming the tempest and speaking words of cheer: "It is I; be not afraid." Then the dawn of peace, the morning of reformation, broke in blissful light over land and sea. And so will it be to the end of time. He whose word is sure,

hath given her this pledge of safety: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

Not less sure and sweet is the revelation of Christ to the individual believer in the time of darkness and sorrow. Many a storm has he passed through; but every one has been glorified by the presence of the Redeemer. Many more may await him, but he need not fear. His trust is in One who treads the wildest billows into a sea of glass, and who hushes the roar of the tempest into the murmuring of the evening zephyr. One more night of trial, at least, must come to all ere the voyage of life is ended. We are sailing right into the darkness of the unknown sea of death. Yet we will not fear. Our Deliverer will come to us even there. Beautiful will be His feet upon the sullen waves; sweet will be the sound of His voice through the gloom, saying to *us*: "It is I; be not afraid;" and then the morning of eternity will break in beauty over the purple shores of the Canaan that we love.

Reverting now, before we close, to our Lord's discourse in general, we observe that it produced startling and seemingly disastrous effects. The mysterious nature of the truths He set forth, and the boldness of His claims in behalf of His divine nature and power, created great perplexity and irritation among the Jews. Indeed, the whole scene would appear to have been of the most exciting character. Now murmurs of dissent arose from the astonished auditory; now they broke out into angry dispute over our Lord's declarations; and it would even seem that some indulged in threats of violence. It is certain that a malignant hostility was evinced on the part of the Jews; for it settled the purpose of Jesus to remain in Galilee. "He would not walk in Jewry; because the

* Matthew xxviii 20.

Jews sought to kill Him." It had become evident that as soon as He appeared in Judea, active measures would be taken for His destruction.

It is somewhat remarkable that the ill-feeling excited by our Lord's discourse, extended beyond the unbelieving Jews, to His immediate followers. Many of His disciples said of some of His declarations: "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" Nor was this the worst: they "went back and walked no more with Him." They were probably influenced, in part by the growing evidences of a wide-spread popular disaffection, and in part by what probably seemed to them a decided tendency to mere fanaticism in the teachings of Jesus.

Observing this tendency on the part of His disciples, Jesus takes occasion, not to abate any of the high claims which had offended them, but to suggest to them that still greater mysteries than any involved in the doctrines just enunciated were to be unfolded in the course of His mission. He further plainly intimates that their perplexity is altogether due to their unbelief. These great truths were spiritual, and to be spiritually discerned. Some of the disciples comprehended not, because there were some of them that believed not. Seizing now upon the occasion afforded to test the faith and devotion of the Twelve, He asks, "Will ye also go away?" Simon Peter as the spokesman of the rest, answers with his usual promptitude, and with a fulness of faith and zeal which his late experience of his Master's divine power and love had largely increased, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life: and we believe, and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The day-dawn of eternal truth had risen upon the soul of Peter; for he believed. His Master accepts his confession of faith; but, that the Twelve may be upon their guard against self-confidence, He warns them that

there is a deadly unbelief among them which will yet work out a dreadful apostasy. Even now, though they were chosen of Him, one of their number was a child of Satan.

While our Lord's immediate followers were thus evincing the weakness of their faith, His sworn enemies, the Pharisees, were untiring in their efforts to find occasion for prejudicing the people against Him. They soon found what, with their rigid adhesion to ceremonial usages and the tradition of the elders, seemed a just cause of complaint. Some of them, who with certain of the scribes had come down from Jerusalem,—doubtless on this very business,—following the multitudes, and watching the movements of our Lord and His disciples, observed some of the latter eating “with defiled or unwashen hands.” Regarding Jesus as responsible for the conduct of His disciples, they assumed that this violation of their laws was by His instruction, and demanded the reason; “Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?” Instead of giving them an answer, Jesus with great boldness rebukes them as hypocrites, applying to them the words of Isaiah: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”* He declares that, with all their assumption of superior holiness, their worship was utterly vain; because their teaching was absurd and wicked. “For,” said He, “laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups and brazen vessels and tables.” “You lay great stress upon mere ceremonial purity, and yet commandments of the most sacred character, as for example, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother,’ you explain away on the most

* Isaiah xxix. 13.

trivial grounds, thus releasing children from the most sacred of all human obligations. Nor is this an isolated case: 'Many such like things do ye.'"

Aware that their sole object was to accuse Him to the people, he called the multitude to Him, and in the most unqualified terms made known to them the true doctrine of personal purity. "Hearken unto me *every one of you*," said He, "and understand. There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him, can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. He that hath ears to hear let him hear." That is, "this is no mere rabbinical subtlety, a thing to be disputed about and understood by doctors alone; it is a matter of simple common sense; for any man having ears to hear may comprehend it. It needs no argument to show that, in the sight of a holy God, a man stands or falls according to his moral purity or uncleanness, and not according to his bodily or ceremonial condition. This you might know from your own prophets, for one of them has told you: 'The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but *the Lord looketh on the heart*.'"^{*}

The course pursued by Jesus gave great offence to the Pharisees. They felt that they had been outwitted. Jesus had both conclusively answered them, and prepossessed the multitude in His favor. The disciples report the matter to Jesus, and He denounces the Pharisees to them as "blind leaders of the blind," who were destined to be destroyed with all those who were duped by them. "Both," says He, "shall fall into the ditch." He then, in answer to Peter's inquiry, mildly rebukes His disciples for their obtuseness, in failing to understand so evident a principle, and proceeds, not so much to explain,

^{*} I. Samuel xvi. 7.

as to expound His statement of the true doctrine. "Out of the heart of man," says He, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

CHAPTER III.

THE SYRO-PHENICIAN WOMAN.

JESUS RETIRES FOR REPOSE TO THE BORDERS OF TYRE—THE WOMAN OF SYRO-PHENICIA—SHE APPLIES TO JESUS—THE DISCIPLES BEG HIM TO SEND HER AWAY—OUR LORD'S RECEPTION OF THE WOMAN—THE MEANING OF OUR LORD'S WORDS—LUTHER'S COMMENT—JESUS GRANTS THE WOMAN'S REQUEST—THE NARRATIVE ILLUSTRATES THE POWER OF PRAYER—THE PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTION TO THE USE OF PRAYER INVALID—WHAT PREVAILING PRAYER MUST BE—THE NARRATIVE SHOWS THE POWER OF FAITH—RELATION OF FAITH TO PRAYER.

MATTHEW XV. 21-28. MARK VII. 24-30.

THE part of our Lord's history on which we now enter, first presents Him to our view as exhausted by His incessant labors in preaching the kingdom of God, in the cities and villages of Galilee; for this, we conjecture, was the reason of His withdrawing from the multitude and seeking temporary seclusion in the northern extremity of Palestine, near the borders of Tyre and Sidon. There, says the evangelist, "He entered into a house, and would have no man know it; but He could not be hid." Though the *Son of man* needed rest, He could not enjoy it. He was too well known. He was too closely watched. Even under the shadow of Mount Lebanon, His retreat was soon found out, for the fragrant ointment bewrayeth itself. In that secluded spot there was one poor sufferer,—or rather one blessed saint,—who was attracted to the Divine Redeemer. The interview between this wo-

man and Jesus, recorded by two of the evangelists, is very touching and instructive.

"A certain woman,"—thus the story begins. She is for us without a name; and all we know of her life is what we find in six or eight verses of the evangelists. And yet, she comes before us with an individuality so strongly marked and interesting, that we feel better acquainted with her than with almost any other woman mentioned in the New Testament.

A few circumstances of great importance to the effect of the narrative, are incidentally disclosed. She *was a woman of Canaan*. She was not only a Gentile, but she belonged to the accursed race that God had doomed to utter destruction. Mark tells us that she was a Syro-phenician by nation, and a *Greek*; by which we understand no more than that she was of Phenician blood and by religion a heathen. She belonged to the same race with the Tyrians, Sidonians and Carthaginians,—a race which was in ancient times very widely spread; having had colonies even in Spain and Britain, and which thus, it may be, contributed a not insignificant rill to the great stream of our Anglo-saxon blood.

There she had dwelt within sight of the snows and cedars of Lebanon; and,—what was of more importance,—in the neighborhood of the worshipers of Jehovah. Doubtless she had heard much concerning the true God; and it is evident that she had already ceased to be an idolator. It is probable too, that she had heard something of *Jesus* the Prophet of Nazareth. Reports of His mighty miracles and of His wonderful sayings must have come across the borders. Having a prepared and susceptible heart, she believed in Him even before she saw Him. So much is implied in her coming to Him.

This woman was in deep affliction. Her daughter was suffering under a strange and terrible disease which was

not uncommon in that age and country. She was, according to Matthew, grievously vexed with a devil; Mark has it, she had an unclean spirit. Medicine offered no remedy for such a malady; help could come from God alone. The mother's heart was agonized:—what to do for her child?

She heard, we know not how, that Jesus was in the neighborhood; and something told her that He was the Physician to whom she must go. But she must, one would think, have had a sore conflict before she gathered up courage to come to the Saviour. Some such train of thought as the following, must have passed through her mind: “Well, Jesus the Nazarene Prophet, they say, has come; He is yonder, just over the border. Now is the time to seek relief for my poor child. It is reported that He has healed many demoniacs in Galilee; and that He is all gentleness and compassion, and never frowns upon a suppliant. I will go and beseech Him to heal my daughter. But, stay; I am a Gentile—a Canaanite. I belong to an accursed race. He is a Jew. Will He receive me? Will He not turn away from the prayer of a poor heathen mother like me? How can I go? But my child, my darling daughter! I must, I will make the attempt. I can but be denied; and my heart tells me that He is too good, too merciful to refuse the prayer of a broken-hearted mother.”

She went. Jesus chanced to be in the highway. She did not at first venture near His person, but cried out to Him from a distance. She probably felt unworthy to approach Him; and, perhaps, something of womanly timidity kept her back. But she was in earnest; and her first words disclosed an intensity of desire and a burden of sorrow, such as a human heart can not long bear without breaking:—“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”

She acknowledges Jesus as the Son of David; that is to say, the Messiah. She offers her prayer to Him as the Christ of God,—the promised King of Israel. Where did she get her faith?—"Have mercy on *me!*" See how she makes her daughter's misery her own.

To this prayer Jesus answers not a word. Neither does He give her any external sign of encouragement. Yet she is not disheartened, but continues to cry, "Have mercy on me." The disciples are at length annoyed. Here is a *scene*,—in the highway too. This poor heathen woman fills the air with her cries. The affair is growing indecorous and disagreeable. "Send her away," they rather petulantly suggest to their Master,—“Send her away, for she crieth after us.” Give her an answer; either grant or deny her request, that her clamorous importunity may cease.

"I am not sent," was the reply, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Startling words! was our Lord's mission then limited to the Jews? Yes, His personal ministry, except in a few cases clearly marked as exceptions, was confined to the children of the covenant. He was first to be a minister of the circumcision, to confirm the promise made unto the fathers. Now and then, indeed, as the cloud of mercy passed over the chosen people, some drops fell on the Gentiles; but the way was not yet prepared for the indiscriminate offer of redemption to the nations. The Jewish mind had been in the process of training for many ages for the express purpose of receiving life and light from the incarnate word, and imparting them to the Gentiles. Therefore Jesus Himself was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But why did our Lord, on this particular occasion, declare the limitation of His mission? We shall see. The disciples understand that the woman's prayer is denied;

but she is encouraged by what silences them. *She comes near; she falls at His feet; she worships Him.* This Gentile mother knows to whom she makes her prayer. Jesus is to her, infinitely more than a mere man; more even than the Son of David; He is her Lord and her God; she adores Him; and He neither reproves her, nor declines the worship which she offers Him. He is silent. The prostrate suppliant puts all a mother's heart and all a Christian's faith into one sentence: "Lord, help me!" This expresses all,—her misery, her helplessness, her yearning desire, her trust in Christ. Surely she will now receive a gracious answer! Jesus, the burden-bearer of all humanity, cannot resist an appeal like this! But what is it we hear? "Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs!" Alas! are these the words of Him of whom it is written, "He shall not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax?"* Is it like Him who is meek and lowly in heart, to call an afflicted mother, pleading for the life and salvation of her child, a *dog*? Is it like Jesus, the Friend of sinners, to thrust away a poor suppliant at His feet with words of contempt and abhorrence?

Somehow the woman herself saw neither severity nor discouragement in this answer. Evidently there is a secret understanding between our Lord and this Gentile. One is almost ready to believe that His looks contradicted His words; that He spoke to her with such a gracious smile, that she was encouraged to keep on pleading.

Yet there was a great truth in what He said. The blessings of Messiah's kingdom,—miracles of healing and heavenly doctrine,—were as yet the children's bread; they belonged, as yet, to the children of Abraham; for the time had not come to spread the feast for all. This

* Isaiah xlii. 3.

the suppliant understands; but she is far from being disheartened. In the beautiful language of another:—"Many, even if they had persevered thus far, would now have gone away in anger or despair. Not so this woman. She, from the very word which seemed to make most against her, with the ready wit of faith, drew an argument in her own favor. She entangled the Lord—Himself most willing to be so entangled,—in His own speech. 'Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.' Upon these words, Luther, who has dwelt on all the circumstances of this little history with a peculiar love, and who seems never weary of extolling the mighty faith of this woman, exclaims: 'Was not that a master-stroke? She snares Christ in His own words.' Didst thou say 'dogs?' It is well; I accept the title and the place; for the dogs are attached to the household, and have a portion of the meal, not the first, not the children's portion, but still—a *portion*—the crumbs which fall from the table. In this very statement of the case Thou bringest us heathen, Thou bringest *me* within the circle of the blessings which the Divine Householder dispenses to His family. We also belong to His household, though we occupy the lowest place in it. According to thine own showing, I am not wholly an alien. I abide by this name, *dog*, therefore, I claim the crumbs."* Thus ends the argument.

Oh, could we have witnessed what followed! Suddenly the Sun of Divine Love, which had been under momentary eclipse, broke forth, and shone full on the Syro-Phenician mother. "O woman," said Jesus, "great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. Go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." Oh, joy to thee, thou "precious winner!" Hasten to thy house,—now again

*Trench on Miracles, page 271.

thy sweet home,—and fold thy daughter in thine arms. She shall be to thee a living memorial of that blessed moment when thou didst prevail with the Son of David, to antedate the day of salvation to the Gentiles; when thou didst receive from His hands, not a *crumb*, but a full loaf, even according to the utmost desire of thy heart. We shall doubtless hear more of the story of thy Saviour's goodness and thine exceeding gladness, when we meet thee, "some summer morning," on the other side of Jordan.

This narrative displays, in the clearest light, the blessed truth that God hears the prayers of the humble and needy. The frigid, self-styled philosopher, his face sharpened into a cynical sneer, tells us that prayer may possibly benefit the supplicant himself; but that it is absurd to suppose that it will have any persuasive influence on the unchangeable Ruler of the world, or make any difference in the course of events. The world is governed by invariable laws which can never be set aside in accordance with the requests of puny insects like men. And so the spruce objector goes his way, leaving us, as he imagines, utterly confounded.

We could have told him that the philosophy of which he boasts, is puerile and delusive; that the unchangeableness of God is the unchangeableness of a PERSON, self-conscious, intelligent, FREE, benevolent, and therefore an unchangeableness in itself an encouragement to prayer; that the laws of nature are living and flexible, yielding to the impulses not only of the Infinite Will but also of creature-wills; and therefore interposing no obstacle to the bestowment of benefits in answer to prayer; that prayer was from the beginning ordained by God as a means for accomplishing His sovereign purposes, and that therefore the government of the world could not go on without it: we could have told the objector all this and more.

But we gladly shun the thorny maze of metaphysics, and at once silence all cavils and remove all misgivings

by pointing to Jesus, the Redeemer, who came into the world to manifest the Father's heart, saying: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." We remind you that at all times He encouraged the poor, the sinful, and the sorrowing to come to Him as supplicants. In vain do you tell us of a God immutably cold and indifferent to the wants and sorrows of men, while we see Jesus, cleansing the kneeling leper, opening the eyes of importunate Bartimeus, healing the centurion's servant, raising from the dead the daughter of Jairus, restoring the dumb but eloquent paralytic, assuring the weeping Magdalen of forgiveness, and saying to the penitent, praying thief, "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Especially, on this occasion, I lead the objector to that memorable spot on the borders of the benighted Gentile world, where the Saviour of mankind said to a poor, nameless heathen woman: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Yes; I point to Him who never turned away a suppliant, and exclaim: "Behold, my God! Lo, He heareth prayer!" Whole volumes of metaphysical demonstrations shall weigh lighter against one such fact as this, than the dust of the summer threshing-floor against great mountains. And all the philosophers in the world, leagued with the subtlest spirits of darkness, shall not rob my heart of its faith in this promise,—*"Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."*

This narrative teaches us *what kind* of prayer is sure to prevail with God. Strange that we should be sent to school to this Syro-Phenician woman, to learn how to pray; but if any human being ever understood the art, she understood it; and she is still, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, the model suppliant.

What first strikes us is, that she was in earnest. She came to Jesus with a heart burdened with a great sorrow and a great desire. She is too much in earnest to pay any attention to the proprieties of style; she never thinks of liturgical etiquette; her prayer is abrupt, impassioned, agonizing; she *cries out* after Christ, in the public way; she *follows* after Him, still crying, "have mercy on me, O Lord!" She *draws near* Him, in her anguish of spirit; she falls at His feet; she worships Him. She has *one thing* to ask, and in asking for that she employs no artifice of language, but rather

The simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try.

Thus it is that prevailing prayer is always offered. The petition which goes up from a heart breaking with its own unutterable longing, pierces the heavens. There is an energy in holy desire which makes the prayer prompted by it irresistible.

It is sometimes said that the highest acts of prayer are marked by serene tranquility of spirit; that the agony of painful desire belongs to a low, not to say morbid spiritual state; that perfect acquiescence in the divine will would preclude *wrestling* at the throne of grace; that unwavering faith would keep the heart free from solicitude and sorrow, even though the particular blessing sought for should be withheld. Whatever grains of truth may be contained in such speculations, the view, as a whole, is at war with Scripture and the facts of Christian experience. Our blessed Lord was sinless and perfect, yet when He prayed in the garden, He was in AN AGONY, and sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. The holiest men whom the church has ever held in her communion,—we speak with reverence,—have drunk of the cup of Christ; each has had his Geth-

semane ; each has had moments of awful anguish, when his soul seemed exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.

The Syro-Phenician woman is an example of *faith*. It is this which Jesus Himself commends : “ O woman, great is thy *faith*.” Her faith indeed was very extraordinary. Her very coming to Jesus was an act of heroic faith ; for she came not only without an invitation or a promise, but in the face of fearful discouragements. Somehow she had gained a firm persuasion that He was both able and willing to help her. She believed beforehand in His love to her, a poor Gentile mother ; and this was great faith indeed.

This faith of hers grew stronger, and shone more brightly through the progress of a trial which would have utterly extinguished that of any ordinary believer. When she came to Jesus she was not encouraged by gracious looks and words ; but she prayed. He answered her not a word ; but she prayed. He spoke at last in words apparently calculated to extinguish all her hopes ; but she prayed. He called her a dog ; but still she prayed and made that very name the ground of her final, triumphant appeal. Thus her faith grew stronger by the discouragements it encountered.

Now this faith is what makes prayer mighty and victorious ; for it is this alone which brings us into that living sympathy with God in which lies the possibility and prevailing power of prayer. The prayer of faith is importunate and persevering, unselfish and without regard to iniquity ; it draws its arguments from the Word and promise of God ; it appeals to His love and compassion ; it makes mention of His holy *Name*, and seeks His glory ; it pleads the merits of the ascended and ever-living High Priest, and rests in His gracious intercession. In a word, it offers the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man which availeth much. So prayed the Syro-Phenician woman. Lord, teach *us* thus to pray!

CHAPTER IV.

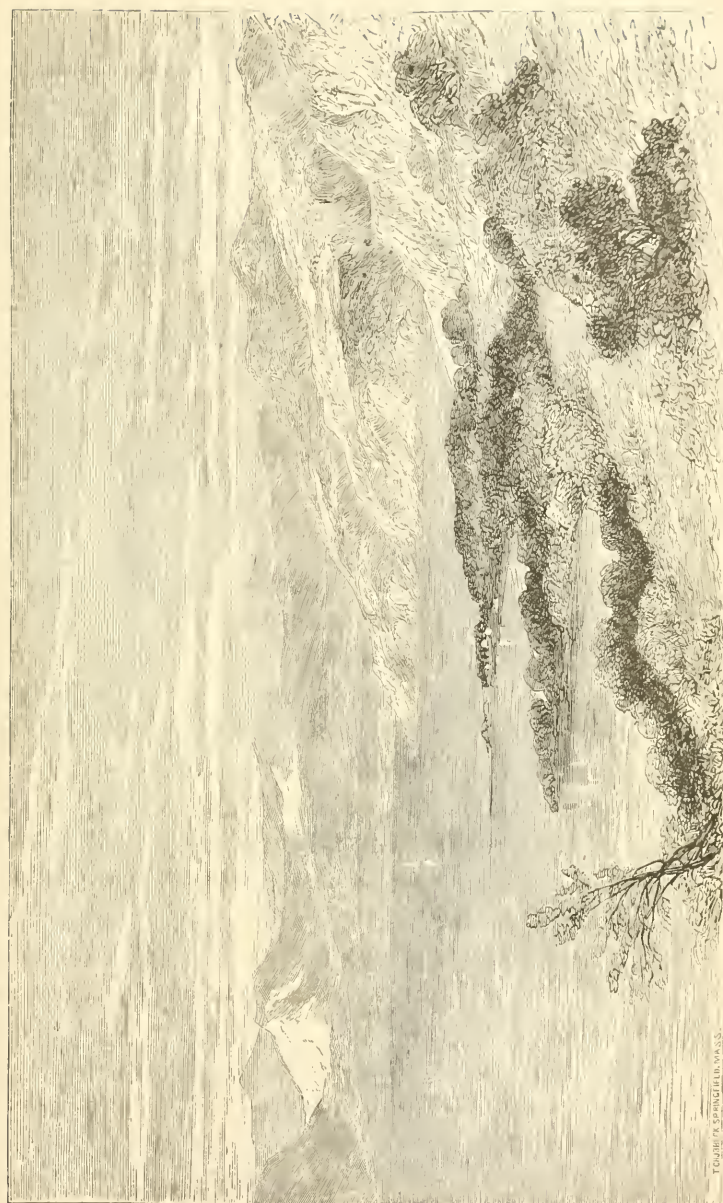
JOURNEY THROUGH ZIDON AND DECAPOLIS TO THE SEA OF GALILEE.

“EPHPIATHIA!”—FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND—PHARISEES SEEK A SIGN—WARNING AGAINST THE PHARISAIC LEAVEN—HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN AT BETHSAIDA—PETER’S CONFESSION—JESUS FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

MATTHEW XV. 29-39; XVI. 1-28. MARK VII. 31-37; VIII. 1-38. LUKE IX. 18-27.

AFTER the events narrated in the last chapter, there was, in that region, no longer any seclusion or repose for our Lord; and He therefore continued His journey. There seems good reason for believing that His route led first northward, through the territory of Zidon; thence along the southern slope of Lebanon, and under the shadow of the snowy Hermon, to the Jordan,* which He crossed, and, passing southward through Decapolis, reached the lake of Gennesaret, on its eastern shore. How long He wandered among those mountain solitudes is not recorded; but the motive which prompted the journey is obvious. He sought rest. There is, besides, abundant evidence that Jesus loved the mountains. While we do not attribute to Him the sentiment which, in our own age, hungers for grand and beautiful scenery as for the bread of life, we doubt not that the Son of Man delighted in those objects and aspects of the material world which

* This view rests on Tischendorf’s text of Mark vii. 31. “Departing from the coasts of Tyre He came *through Zidon* to the Sea of Galilee.”



SEA OF GALILEE LOOKING TOWARDS MAGDALA.

T. GARDNER, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

especially displayed the wisdom, power, and majesty of God. We doubt not that the mountain air invigorated His worn and weary body; and that the sight of alpine heights, clothed with primeval forests or crowned with perpetual snow, refreshed and gladdened His heart. It is probable that He improved the opportunity offered by these days of seclusion, to instruct His disciples more perfectly in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

The region called Decapolis,—originally a small territory lying to the east, and south-east of Lake Gennesaret,—was, in the time of Christ, a province of considerable extent, stretching from Damascus on the north to Philadelphia on the south. It was a portion of the Holy Land of which the Jews, after the captivity, had failed to gain possession; and which was, in consequence, inhabited by Gentiles. The Ten Cities, indeed, had been rebuilt and partially colonized by the Romans; and were probably strongholds of paganism. Jesus was, therefore, in the midst of Gentiles, though He seems not to have preached to them, or made Himself known as the Saviour of the world.

It was probably when He came into that portion of Decapolis where He had healed the demoniac of Gadara, that He was recognized by the people, and was solicited to heal a man who was not only deaf but almost dumb. He was certainly not a demoniac, but a sufferer from disease or natural obstruction. Jesus regarded him with pity, but not wishing to create excitement among the people, already congregating, took him aside, “and put His fingers in his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue: and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.”

The sighing of Jesus and the lifting up of His eyes to heaven, recorded by the graphic Mark, are very suggestive and touching. They bring before our eyes the great

Burden-bearer of humanity, weary of His mighty load, and appealing to the Father for support and consolation. Weary, however, as He was in carrying on His heart the sins and sicknesses of men, He did not turn aside from His work. In His own person was a fountain of healing virtue—a fountain inexhaustible and free. When He put His fingers in the deaf man's ears, the deadened nerve was restored; and when He touched the infirm and stammering tongue, it spake plainly. Let deaf mutes and stammerers know that they are regarded by the Divine Physician with compassion.

This miracle, though Jesus commanded that it should be kept secret, was soon noised abroad, and produced a prodigious excitement among the people of the region. "He does all things well," they said; or *He makes all well again*; "He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." What happened so often in Galilee, now occurred in Decapolis; the multitude, hearing of the miracle, brought the lame, blind, dumb, and sick, and laid them at Jesus' feet, and He healed them all.

The place of concourse was on the highlands overlooking the Sea of Galilee—a wilderness or desert. Jesus, having had the multitude with Him now three days, saw that many of them were hungry and ready to faint. In the fulness of His compassion, He provided food for four thousand, by miraculously multiplying seven loaves and a few little fishes. When all had satisfied their hunger, the disciples gathered seven baskets full of the fragments that remained. Though this miracle differs, in several important circumstances, from a similar one narrated in a recent chapter,* it calls for no special exposition.

Having dismissed the multitude, Jesus passed over the lake to a place on the western coast, called Dalmanutha,

* See Chapter I., Part VII.

in the territory of Magdala.* On His arrival, His ever-watchful enemies, the Pharisees, immediately assailed Him with ensnaring questions, desiring Him, among other things, to show them a sign from heaven. His answer was in language of fearful rebuke: "When it is evening ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." Those who were blind to all the overpowering proofs which Jesus had already given of His divine mission, but, moved by a mere appetite for marvels, demanded some stupendous but useless sign from heaven, should be left to their own unbelief. With an enigmatical hint touching His resurrection, He abruptly departed.

Again taking ship, Jesus seems to have touched at various points along the coast, till He came to the city of Bethsaida. There a blind man was brought to Him to be healed. Having led the man out of the town, He anointed his eyes with saliva, put His hands on him, and asked him if he saw aught. "I see men," he replied, "as trees walking." That is to say, his vision was not yet clear and distinct. Jesus again put His hands on his eyes, and bade him look up. The cure was complete.

The miracle, in this case, was doubtless instantaneous; but the man's own consciousness was so confused and his faith so imperfect, that he had not, at once, the full use of his restored organ. That the cure proceeded, in this

* It is assumed by some writers, I know not on what grounds, that Jesus having touched at Dalmanutha, sailed to Capernaum, and that *there* His interview with the Pharisees took place. It seems probable to me that, at this time, our Lord *avoided* Capernaum.

case, as in all others, from the healing virtue in the person of Christ, is apparent from the laying on of His hands and the application of His saliva to the diseased parts.

From Bethsaida Jesus seems to have journeyed to Cesarea Philippi. This city, named by Herod the Great Cesarea, in honor of Augustus Cæsar, and by Herod's son, the tetrarch Philip, Cesarea Philippi, partly after himself, was situated on a limestone terrace at the foot of Mount Hermon, at the easternmost and most important of the sources of the Jordan. Says Josephus, "Herod, having accompanied Cæsar to the sea and returned home, erected him a beautiful temple of white marble, near the place called Panium. This is a fine cavern in a mountain; under which there is a great cavity in the earth; and the cavern is abrupt, and very deep and full of water. Over it hangs a vast mountain; and under the mountain rise the springs of the river Jordan."* Dr. Robinson's description is also well worth quoting: "The situation is unique, combining in an unusual degree the elements of grandeur and beauty. It nestles in its recess at the southern base of the mighty Hermon, which towers in majesty to an elevation 7000 or 8000 feet above. The abundant waters of the glorious fountain spread over the terrace luxuriant fertility, and the graceful interchange of copse, lawn and waving fields."†

It was near this city that an important conversation between Christ and His apostles occurred. As He was praying in a secluded place, He asked them, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" The disciples,—who doubtless mingled more freely with the people than their Master,—replied: "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Doubtless they correctly reported the

* Joseph. Antiq., chap. xv., page 10, section B.

† Robinson's Researches, volume 3, page 404.

various opinions they had heard expressed; and doubtless those opinions indicated the kind of impression which Jesus had made on the popular mind. That Jesus was not only a prophet but much more than a common prophet, the people had no doubt; they did not, however, believe in Him as the Messiah, but rather as a forerunner of the Messiah. As Elijah was to come before the Christ, some were inclined to believe that he had appeared in Jesus. Others, fancying perhaps that they discerned in Jesus a tenderness and sorrow more in keeping with the spirit of the weeping prophet, thought he was Jeremiah. Still others—and probably, the larger number—did not hesitate to avow the conviction that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead. Their Messiah was to be a conquering prince, rather than a lowly prophet and healer; and they therefore regarded Jesus as one sent to prepare his way before him. Our Lord well knew how little He was understood by the multitude; but the time had come for Him to elicit from His own immediate followers an explicit confession of their faith. Therefore He said to them: “But whom say ye that I am?” It is not quite certain that *all* the apostles would have been ready with an answer, if Peter had not, as usual, spoken for them. That they believed Him to be the Christ is certain; but that they all had a clear and definite faith in His divinity is doubtful. Perhaps this was the moment when their adoring reverence and love crystallized into intelligent conviction. PETER seems to have been among the first to penetrate the great mystery of godliness, GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH. Hence his prompt reply, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” That he intended to profess his faith in Jesus as the only begotten Son of God—that is to say, that he intended to recognize the Lord as a Divine Person, is evident from the fact that otherwise his confession would have set forth nothing

new—nothing which had not been held by all the disciples from the beginning. Andrew had said to Peter at Bethabara, “We have found the Messiah;” and Nathaniel had said to Jesus Himself, “Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.” But neither Andrew nor Nathaniel had any definite faith in Jesus as the eternal Son of God incarnate; and this was precisely what Peter confessed. “He saw bodily before him, in Jesus, the reflection of the living God, who fills the universe, the counterpart of the Deity, notwithstanding that He, as the Son of man, looked more like some poor fugitive than the Messianic King. In this confession he goes beyond any conception of the Messiah which was current among the Jews, and far beyond it.”* In fact, Peter, in these words, put himself beyond the pale of the existing Jewish church; he disengaged himself from the religious system of the whole nation; and he uttered, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and in the strength of a full and joyous faith, the great truth on which the church of the new covenant is built. Hence, the answer of Jesus is in words of exultant congratulation and benediction: “Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The faith of Peter was not the fruit of human culture, but of immediate divine illumination. It was by supernatural revelation that he had been enabled to discern the divine in Jesus, and it was by a supernatural impulse

* Lange's “Life of Christ,” volume 3, page 231.

that he had made this bold and explicit confession. And therefore does Jesus pronounce him blessed or happy. The name, Peter, MAN OF ROCK, had been prophetically given him at Bethabara;* but now it was applied to him as significant of the strength and endurance of his faith. Our Lord goes on to declare that on Peter, who, by virtue of his faith so boldly confessed was a "living stone," He would build His church. In fact, the apostle "was the first of those *foundation-stones* on which the living temple of God was built: this building itself beginning on the day of Pentecost by the laying of *three thousand living stones* on this foundation."† Further, our Lord gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and he was in fact the first to open the kingdom both to the Jews and Gentiles. The power of binding and loosing, signifies the authority given to Peter then and there representing all the apostles, to govern the church on earth. That Peter was to have any successor in his functions as a living foundation-stone, as the bearer of the keys, as binder and looser, or even as apostle, is not intimated, either in this or any other saying of our Lord.

Respecting the church which should thus be built on Peter, our Lord declares that the gates of hell—that is to say, the power of the kingdom of hell—should not prevail against it. Peter, the rock, rests on the Rock of ages; and the edifice built thereon shall stand forever.

The effect of our Lord's commendation of Peter seems at first to have been hurtful to his humility. The very next incident recorded of him is that he took it upon him to tutor and rebuke his Master, whom he had just confessed as the Son of the living God. The occasion was this. Jesus, still in the region of Cesarea Philippi, "began to show unto His disciples that He must go unto Jeru-

* Matthew xvi. 18.

† Alford.

salem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." This was what Peter could not understand or believe; for he could not as yet conceive how *the Christ, the Son of the living God*, should suffer and die. Notwithstanding his spiritual illumination, he saw divine things as the blind man of Bethsaida, at the moment of his cure, saw men as trees walking. If the prophets could not understand their own prevision of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow,* it is scarcely surprising that Peter should have been perplexed and disturbed by the disclosures of Christ touching His death and resurrection. But his unseemly presumption in contradicting and rebuking his Master—"Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee"—this is amazing. The answer of Christ must have made the ears of the apostle to tingle to his dying day: "Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offense unto Me; for thou savor-est not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Turning to His disciples, He said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his works. Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here, who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

The meaning of this closing prediction was made clear about one week after it was uttered.

* I. Peter i. 11.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

MOUNT HERMON—JESUS TAKES THE THREE DISCIPLES AND RETIRES TO THE MOUNT—OCCASION FOR THIS ACT—WHY HE CHOSE PETER, JAMES AND JOHN—THE TRANSFIGURATION—FORCE OF THE WORD TRANSFIGURED—APPEARANCE OF MOSES AND ELIAS ON THE SCENE—OUR LORD'S CONFERENCE WITH THEM—PETER'S PROPOSITION—THE OVERSHADOWING CLOUD—THE DIVINE VOICE—JESUS REJOINS THE DISCIPLES AND ENJOINS SECRECY UPON THEM—THE TRANSFIGURATION A REPRESENTATION OF CHRIST'S TRUE GLORY—ALSO FORESHADOWS HIS APPEARANCE IN HEAVEN—TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SAINTS.

MATTHEW XVII 1-13. MARK IX, 2-13. LUKE IX, 28-36.

ON the extreme northern boundary of Palestine lies an extensive mountain region; its lofty double range rising like a rocky barrier, between Syria and the Holy Land. "From the moment," says Stanley, "that the traveler reaches the plain of Shechem in the interior, nay, even from the depths of the Jordan valley by the Dead Sea, the snowy heights of Hermon are visible. The ancient names of its double range are all significant of this position. It was 'Zion,' 'the upraised;' or 'Hermon,' 'the lofty peak;' or 'Shenir' and 'Sirion,' 'the glittering breast-plate of ice;' or, above all, 'Lebanon,' the Mont Blanc of Palestine; the 'White Mountain' of ancient times; the mountain of the 'Old White-headed Man,' or the 'Mountain of Ice,' in modern times. So long as its snowy tops were seen, there was never wanting to the Hebrew poetry the image of unearthly grandeur, which nothing else but

perpetual snow can give, especially as seen in the summer, when ‘the firmament around it seems to be on fire.’”*

Six days after the conversation recorded in the preceding chapter, according to Matthew and Mark, “about an eight days” after, according to Luke, who,—following the usual Jewish phraseology,—includes the two fractions of days at the beginning and end of the period as full days, Jesus selected three of His disciples,—Peter, James and John, and led them up into “a high mountain apart.” The name of the mountain is not given; but it was most likely Hermon, of which we have just spoken, that being in the vicinity of Cesarea Philippi, where our Lord had been laboring. Nowhere better than in this sublime region, could He have found a place so removed from the noise and bustle of the world, and so well fitted for spiritual contemplation, and high communing with God. To such places our Lord was wont, especially in the stillness of the night, to retire for meditation and prayer,—so careful was He to exclude the world from His hours of devotion.

The occasion of our Lord’s withdrawal to the seclusion of this mountain height, was one of sublime significance. He had appeared among men in the form of a *servant*. The fulness of the Godhead which dwelt in Him bodily was veiled from human view by His lowly appearance. On several memorable occasions, it is true, His glory,—“the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,” had flashed through the veil, and been revealed to a few chosen witnesses. It was His purpose, however, to make one express revelation of that glory, altogether unique and wonderful. Three of the evangelists,—Matthew, Mark and Luke,—have given us a full and circumstantial account of this event. We refer to the Transfiguration.

* Stanley’s “Sinai and Palestine,” page 395.

It may seem somewhat extraordinary, that only three of the disciples were selected to be eye-witnesses of the glory of Christ; and the fact becomes more remarkable, when we consider that these three were chosen on other occasions, to be witnesses of His more glorious miracles. They seem to have constituted the inmost circle of our Lord's followers and friends; they were always near His person, and were admitted to enjoy His more unreserved and confidential communications. Nor was this the result of mere favoritism; they were, doubtless, in a more advanced stage of spiritual development than their associates; were more in sympathy with their Master; and were more enlightened and better qualified to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Hence, it was given them to witness those manifestations of His glory, which the others were not yet able to bear.

Behold then our Lord with the three disciples, on the "holy mount," in the dimness and silence of this ever-memorable night;—for "it was probably night, when this marvellous spectacle was vouchsafed to the disciples. Such an assumption best explains the 'next day' of Luke ix. 37. This, if it was so, must have infinitely enhanced the grandeur of the vision; although the brightness doubtless was such as would have paled even the noon-day sun."* Let us draw near with reverence and humility; for a divine voice exclaims: "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."† Jesus, the pure and holy, now engages in prayer,—fit preparation for the glory which is to be gathered about Him. And as He prayed, He was transfigured before them,—the fashion of His countenance was altered, His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth

* Trench's Studies on the Gospels, page 194.

† Exodus iii. 5.

can white them,—white as the light, white and glistening.” The word transfigured signifies, not a change of *substance*, but of *form*; as Matthew Henry says: “The substance of His body remained the same, but the accidents and appearances of it were greatly altered. He was not turned into a spirit; but His body, which had appeared in weakness and dishonor, now appeared in power and glory. . . . Christ is both God and man; but in the days of His flesh, He took on Him the *form of a servant*; He drew a veil over the glory of His Godhead; but now, in His transformation, He put by that veil and appeared *in the form of God*, and gave the disciples a glimpse of His glory, which could not but change His form.”

Proceeding with the details of the transfiguration, Luke says that “The fashion of His countenance was changed,” which we might well understand as that elevated and heavenly expression of countenance, which the Son of God must have borne when in the act of communion with the Father, were it not that Matthew has used more precise and graphic words: “His face did shine as the sun.” This can not be set aside as either metaphor or hyperbole. The meaning evidently is that the Saviour’s face was illuminated from within, and shone with a sun-like glory. There is as yet no mention of any external splendor, as if His countenance shone by reflection. There can be no doubt that the effulgence which glorified His flesh was the out-beaming of that glory which He had with the Father, before the world was. And not only did this light radiate from His face, but also from His whole body, for His very raiment became white and glittering. Speaking of this resplendence of our Lord’s person, Trench uses, in a recent work, the striking language: “All words seem weak to the evangelists; all images fail them here. St. Mark, whose words I have quoted, borrows one image from the world of nature,

another from man's art and device ; by these he struggles to set forth and reproduce for his readers the transcendent brightness of that light which now arrayed, and from head to foot, the person of our Lord, breaking forth from within, and overflowing the very garments which He wore ; until in their eyes who beheld, He seemed to clothe Himself with light as with a garment, light being indeed the proper and peculiar garment of Deity.*

Other persons now enter upon the scene. "There talked with Him two men, Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory." They evidently appeared in a bodily form, as glorified men. This would seem to intimate that they were in the resurrection state. One of them, we know, had been translated without seeing death, and was in a state equivalent to that of the resurrection. The other was clothed upon for the time, at least, with a spiritual body, so that he became visible to the disciples.†

This was a wonderful conference. The speakers were Moses, the representative of the Law ; Elijah, the chief of the Prophets, and Jesus, in whom the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled. The subject on which they discoursed was His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. This was a theme of the deepest interest to

* Psalms cv. 2 ; Habakkuk iii. 4. Studies in the Gospels, page 194.

† Archbishop Trench, in his recent work, (*Studies in the Gospels*, pages 197, 198) has revived the ancient *dispute about the body of Moses* (Jude 9) : "We can not dismiss the question, why the two who appear should be exactly Moses and Elias ? It was not merely that among all the prophets and saints of the Old Testament these were the two, of whom one had not died, and the other had no sooner tasted of death than probably his body was withdrawn from under the dominion of death, and of him that had the power of death ; the two, therefore, whose apparition in glorified bodies before the day of resurrection had less in it perplexing than that of any others would have had." The suggestion is by no means new ; it may be found, in language more striking and felicitous in Matthew Henry. I have not inserted it in the text because it struck me as more curious and fanciful than solid.

all the prophets who had lived since the world began; for they all "searched diligently, what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."* No wonder, therefore, that the death of Christ was the theme of this memorable conference.

Meanwhile, the three disciples gazed at the august scene, and listened to that celestial colloquy, till their mortal faculties were overpowered. They were struck with a kind of blessed paralysis, by the glory of the vision, though their senses were not locked up, nor their consciousness suspended. Peter, ready to speak, even in the presence of immortals, said to Jesus: "Master, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." In his ecstasy he would not have the glory vanish away; he shrank from returning to the world; there, on that mountain, where the glory of Christ's kingdom was manifested, he would ever dwell.

And yet Peter spoke in a half-unconscious, ecstatic bewilderment. In a sort of self-forgetful humility, he proposes only to make tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elias; none for himself and his fellow-disciples. Yet, all humility aside, to make no provision for the proper shelter for himself and his earthly associates on that bleak spot was far from sensible; and the thought of building tents on the mountain top for glorified immortals was simply absurd. Ah, a state of mere religious ecstasy is not the best adapted to the practical wants or duties of this life. Nothing more than a passing rapture, even though lighted with the actual "glory of regions celestial," is all that is safe for even an inspired apostle. No, Peter, you shall

* I. Peter, i. 11.

not dwell on this mountain. Though it is good to be here, your duty is elsewhere. You must go down again into the dusty work-day world. You must toil along the miry way of common life for many years. You must run the race for an immortal garland, over an earthly course. The time for heavenly rest, for ecstatic enjoyment, is not till all this is past.

But the thought of abiding on that mountain was suddenly swept from Peter's mind. For, while he was yet speaking a bright cloud suddenly overshadowed them and concealed from their view, not only natural objects, but also Jesus, with Moses and Elias. This cloud, according to the best scholars, was a *light-cloud*; that is, a cloud composed of light—a cloud which did not conceal objects by casting a shadow, but which by its intense splendor produced the effect of darkness. In this singular cloud we recognize the ancient, mysterious, supernatural symbol of Jehovah's presence among His people; the pillar of cloud and fire in which he dwelt when guiding Israel through the Red Sea and the wilderness; and the shekinah which hallowed first the tabernacle and afterwards the temple, the chosen place of which He said: "Here will I dwell for I have desired it."*

While thus overshadowed by the cloud and overwhelmed with awe, they heard a voice out of the cloud saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Once before, had God spoken from the excellent glory in attestation of Jesus as His beloved Son,—at His baptism;—and now, He gives testimony in His behalf afresh, with the added injunction: "Hear ye Him." Thus was our Lord invested with all authority in heaven and earth. This voice has rendered all His sayings as authoritative, as if they had been

* Psalms cxxxii. 14.

spoken to man in a voice of thunder out of the excellent glory.

When the disciples heard this voice, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. But "Jesus came and touched them and said: Arise, and be not afraid." When at length, they ventured to look around them, the glorious vision had passed away and "they saw no man any more, save Jesus only, with themselves." Our Lord had resumed the *servant* form. They now descended the mountain, Jesus, the meanwhile charging His disciples, "that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man was risen from the dead." This was because His disciples generally were not prepared to understand the transfiguration till Christ was raised from the dead; not before would they be qualified to grasp the sublime meaning of the vision.

In order that we may enter into the full meaning of this supernatural scene, we must recall the declaration of our Lord one week before:—"there be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." The three evangelists have carefully recorded this prophecy in connection with the vision; and the apostle Peter speaks of "the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" as what he had himself witnessed.* The transfiguration therefore was a true though partial fulfillment of the prophecy. It was, in the words of Matthew Henry, "a *specimen*" of the coming and kingdom of the Lord. John the Baptist first and Jesus afterwards had preached the kingdom of God as at hand; and this was the dominant idea in the minds of the disciples. Yet their conception of it was exceedingly erroneous. They expected that Jesus would ascend the throne of David, and establish a victorious

* II. Peter i. 16-18.

earthly monarchy. They could not conceive of a rejected, suffering Messiah; neither could they understand the real glory of His person and reign. Jesus therefore determined to give the three most advanced disciples a representation of His kingdom and glory. Thus understood, the whole scene is replete with the deepest interest and instruction. Well meditated, it will yield us a true conception of the kingdom of Christ in its final glory.

In the first place, let us note how every act and circumstance of this representative scene is subservient to one great purpose, namely, to invest the Saviour with transcendent dignity and glory. He appears as the center of the vision. We see the very body He had assumed becoming self-luminous, like the very substance of light, and shining with a sun-like splendor. This is very significant. Light has always been regarded, even by the heathens themselves, as the most striking symbol of the Divine Essence; and God Himself has consecrated it as such a symbol. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." How much there is of metaphor in this it is impossible for us to know. We are certain that the glory which radiated from our Lord's body was the external manifestation of that divine fulness which dwelt in Him. So doubtless the three disciples regarded it. "We beheld His glory," says John, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."*

* The following passage from Trench's "Studies in the Gospels,"—a work published since the above was written,—will be of interest to the reader: "In the circumstance that His glory was not one which was lent Him, but His own, bursting forth as from an inner fountain of light, not merely gilding Him from without, not playing like that of Moses, on the skin and surface of His countenance; perhaps also in its being a glory which arrayed, not His face alone, but His entire person, we have those tokens of superiority, those prerogatives of the Master above the servant, which we are evermore able to trace even in matters wherein one or another of these may seem to have anticipated, and thus to have come into some sort of competition with Him." (Page 195.)

There is reason to believe also that the effulgence which beamed from His flesh, on this occasion, was intended to represent to the three witnesses and to *us*, the permanent appearance of Christ's "glorious body" in heaven. We may conceive of Him as presenting to the view of saints and angels above, *that* altered fashion of countenance, that face shining as the sun, those garments white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them,—in a word, that transfigured humanity, which the disciples saw on the mount. In that same glorified body will He come at the last day, in the clouds of heaven, to judge the world and glorify His saints. And in that body will He dwell among them forever in New Jerusalem.

Other circumstances concurred to show forth the glory of our Lord. The sudden appearance of the light-cloud and the voice which came forth from it, saying: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him," were evidently intended to invest Him with surpassing majesty. That cloud which enveloped His person represented the ineffable fact that in Him humanity was taken into God, which was confirmed by the voice declaring His Divine Sonship. Besides, that voice invested Him with supreme Kingship. The Son of man is appointed Lord and Ruler of heaven and earth in the presence of the representatives of both. "Hear Him"—*obey Him*—is the command addressed to all the armies of heaven and all the inhabitants of the earth. Our Lord Himself doubtless refers to this high commission, when He says after His resurrection: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Christ, therefore, in this scene is exhibited to us as the supreme King to whom is put in subjection this present world and the world to come. Thus is He crowned with many crowns. His name is above every name; His throne above every throne. When *we* see Him, at last, it will be as King of kings,

and Lord of lords, reigning in human form over all the hosts of the redeemed, nay, over the whole universe. When His full-orbed glory shall be revealed to His people they shall sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And every creature in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them will respond, saying, Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever."

Further, this scene of the transfiguration may teach us the glorious condition of the redeemed in the kingdom of God. They will be made partakers of the glory of Christ. Moses and Elias appeared with Him *in glory*. They also entered into the cloud. They also were transfigured. And a similar transfiguration awaits all the people of Christ. "The glory Thou hast given Me, I have given them," says the Saviour.* St. Peter calls himself a *partaker* of the glory that shall be revealed. "We know," says John, "that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."† So also the apostle Paul assures us that He will fashion our vile body like unto His glorious body. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."‡

It may well be suggested, in closing, that the appearance of Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration had a special prophetic significance. As he was rapt away from the earth, without tasting death, so those who shall be alive at the coming of the Lord, shall be changed and

* John xvii. 22.

† John iii. 2.

‡ I. Corinthians xv. 47-49.

translated. As this change could not be foreshown in the person of our Lord Himself, who was destined from eternity to be slain, and descend into the grave, it was necessary that it should be set forth in one or more of His types and forerunners. In the translation of Enoch and Elijah this needed prophetic symbol was given. And when the latter appeared on the holy mount, to wait on the transfigured Lord, it was to show that not only the resurrection of the holy dead, but the transformation and rapture of the living saints, should come from fellowship with the risen Redeemer, that in all things, He might have the preëminence.

CHAPTER VI.

JESUS HEALS THE LUNATIC CHILD.

THE LIFE OF JESUS ONE OF CONTRASTS—A LUNATIC CHILD BROUGHT TO BE HEALED—THE DISCIPLES ATTEMPT THE CURE AND FAIL—JESUS APPEARS AND IS GREETED BY THE MULTITUDE—THE FATHER APPEALS TO JESUS—HE REBUKES HIS DISCIPLES AND THE PEOPLE—THE FATHER'S DISTRESS AND WANT OF FAITH—JESUS HEALS THE CHILD—EFFECT OF THE MIRACLE—WHY THE DISCIPLES FAILED TO EFFECT A CURE—FAITH, ITS KINDS—TRUE FAITH VITAL AND THE GROWTH OF LOVE—IT IS PRODUCTIVE AND POWERFUL—MEANS OF INCREASING FAITH.

MATTHEW XVII. 14-21. MARK IX. 14-29. LUKE IX. 37-43.

THE life of Jesus was full of wonderful contrasts. The natural and the supernatural, the earthly and the heavenly, glory and humiliation, the divine and the human, were commingled in almost every scene of the wonderful drama. Thus it was, that while our Lord was upon the mount, clothed upon with a majesty ineffable, a scene calculated to bring His name and mission into dishonor and contempt was witnessed on the plain below. Jesus had disappeared from the multitude, they knew not where or how. Nine of the apostles, however, and many other disciples were there. They were doubtless engaged in teaching, and healing diseases, in their Master's absence. An afflicted father, whose only son, now a youth, was a lunatic,—an evil spirit of extraordinary malignity having superinduced on a natural malady the most fearful spiritual disorders,—had come to seek a cure at the hands of Jesus.

Not finding the Master, he entreated the disciples to heal his child. They willingly made the attempt; but met with an ignominious failure. They were overwhelmed with confusion. They had doubtless called over the demoniac the name of Christ; they had done it in the presence of a great multitude; and that name seemed to be powerless. Their mortification was aggravated by the presence of many secret and avowed enemies, who could not conceal their exultation. There were certain scribes present who seized the occasion to *question* the disciples. Their questions were doubtless malicious and insulting; and we may easily imagine that to the discomfited disciples, who were ill qualified to cope with their antagonists in argument, they were highly embarrassing. They had hitherto been able to refute objectors by *deeds*; but now they seemed without any resources. They stood confounded, unable either to understand or explain the cause of their failure. Their adversaries were ready to impute it to a want of power in Jesus himself. "Here, then," they probably reasoned, "the lofty claims of the Nazarene impostor are publicly exposed. His former cures were either illusive, or were effected by natural means; here is a case of real malady which mocks His power." We may well conceive that the multitude were in a state of intense excitement, wondering what the issue would be.

Suddenly Jesus appears in the midst of them. Mark informs us that when "the people beheld Him they were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him." Why should the people have been *amazed* when they saw Him? The explanation is both obvious and interesting. He had come from high communings, and a marvellous investiture of light and majesty on the mountain. There is, then, reason to suppose that "His face and person yet glistened, with traces of the glory which had clothed Him there;—traces which had not yet disappeared, nor

faded into the light of common day. When Moses descended from a lesser and typical transfiguration, his face shone so that the people could not steadfastly behold him, and were afraid to come nigh him. *That* was a threatening glory; the intolerable brightness of the law. But the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, though awful, was attractive, full of grace and beauty, drawing men to Him, not driving them from Him.* Hence, *the people came running to Him and saluted Him*; not merely as one who had been temporarily absent; but with the spontaneous reverence which the gracious majesty of His presence was fitted to inspire.

Seeing the scribes questioning with the disciples, He asked them: "What question ye with *them*?" This was as if He had said: "It is apparent that you are exulting over the perplexity into which you have thrown these weak, unlearned fishermen, my disciples; turn now from the servants to the Master. What questions have you to propose to Me? The scribes were silent. But there was one among the multitude, to whom these questions were of little interest; one who was burdened with weightier matters. In tones full of anguish he exclaimed: "Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away; and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

The cause of the *questioning*, of the perplexity of the disciples, and of the unwonted excitement of the multitude, is now apparent. We seem to see the Master looking round upon the crowd, and especially upon His disciples and their adversaries, with an expression of majestic displeasure mingled with sorrow. "O faithless and perverse

* Trench "On Miracles," pages 291, 292.

generation," He exclaims, "how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" This reproof was doubtless addressed to all who heard it; but fell most heavily on the disciples. It is the language of a teacher, who has long borne with the perverse dulness and indocility of his pupils. "Have I abode with you so long, and have you profited so little by My teaching?" We are reminded of His words to Philip: "Have I been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?"* There also seems to be in these words a distinct intimation that He could not leave them, to enter upon His glory, till they should have learned their task; till they should have, as it were, acquired strength to *go alone*. He had been absent from them but a few hours, and the weakness of their faith had been demonstrated to their own confusion, and to the triumph of their enemies. The rebuke of our Lord also fell upon the father of the lunatic, who had addressed Him in a tone of unbelief. He did not even come as a *suppliant*, but merely narrated the failure of the disciples. He seems to feel that the disease of his child is incurable. He doubts, as plainly appears in the progress of the conversation, whether Jesus Himself can effect a cure. No wonder, therefore, that he shared in the reproof as one of a faithless and perverse generation. Probably this man and all the multitude had witnessed many of our Lord's mighty miracles, and yet this one failure of the disciples had created general doubt in respect to the extent of His power.

Our Lord now directs that the demoniac should be brought to Him. As the unhappy youth approaches the presence of the Saviour, he falls into a fearful paroxysm; he is torn with convulsions; he falls on the ground; he wallows, he foams, he writhes with agony. It was the

* John xiv. 9.

usual effect of Christ's presence on demoniacs, to bring on a crisis of their awful malady. The powers of hell recoil from contact with the heavenly and divine. We may suppose that the evil spirit was filled with rage and terror at the certainty of being expelled from his living habitation. His wrath was great because his time was short. Looking with pity on the miserable victim of Satanic malice, Jesus asks the father, "How long is it since this came unto him?" "Of a child," is the reply. And then the unhappy parent proceeds to picture the sufferings of the youth, who frequently, under the attacks of this dreadful disease, fell into the fire and into the water, sometimes perhaps of choice, incited by the evil spirit to self-destruction. "If Thou *canst* do anything," he adds, "have compassion on us and help us." The afflicted parent makes the sufferings of the child his own:—"have compassion on *us*,—help *us*." In this, he resembles the Syro-Phœnician mother;—but how unlike her in faith! She doubted not either the power or the disposition of Jesus to heal her daughter; but this Jewish father is full of unbelief. He comes to our Lord very much as he would have applied to some celebrated physician: "If Thou *canst* do anything, help us." He is not sure that his child *can* be cured. He has no confidence in the *unlimited, supernatural* power of Christ; the most he can hope is that there is a *possibility* of cure. "If Thou *canst* do anything"—O, thou of little faith! Knowest thou that He to whom thou speakest such words is the Maker of heaven and earth, the Lord of nature, the Giver of life, "the everlasting God who fainteth not neither is weary?" Speakest thou such words to Him, who governs the winds and the seas; who commands legions of angels and they come and go at His bidding? Alas, this benighted suppliant knows not that He whom he approaches as a physician has just been

declared by a voice on yonder mountain, God's only begotten Son!

Yet, though ignorant and unbelieving, he is in earnest. The father's heart within him is stirred to its lowest depths. He is ready to pray to any one who can heal his child. And there is also in his heart a germ of living faith. To quicken and develop this, our Lord, first of all bends His gracious purpose. "If thou canst *believe*, all things are possible to him that *believeth*." As if he had said: "there is no want of power to perform this or any other miracle, but there is a condition which thou must fulfil ere thy child can be healed. If thou canst *believe*, then I can heal." These words penetrate like a ray of heavenly light into the dark soul of the agonized parent; he suddenly becomes conscious both of the beginning of faith and of the vast abyss of unbelief in his heart, and he cries out: "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." "Help thou my unbelief!" Thus it ever is; when a sinner believes, he is first made fully sensible of his unbelief. "Only in the presence of actual grace in the soul does any man perceive the strength and prevalence of the opposing corruption. Before, he had no measure by which to gauge his deficiency."* This man believes, and Christ does help his unbelief. No wonder that at that moment he wept; it was the crisis, not only of his child's fate, but of his own.

All this while the multitude have been streaming together. The very presence of Christ would have attracted them; but the case of the lunatic had already enlisted the deepest interest. Our Lord seeing the concourse, rebuked the foul spirit, saying in a voice of divine authority: "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him and enter no more into him." The word

* Trench "On Miracles," page 296.

of power which shakes the grisly principalities of hell is spoken. The demon, crying out and tearing the victim again, came out of him, and he lay as one dead. Indeed, the people pressing around him declared that life was extinct, so sore had been the struggle ere the evil spirit quit his usurped habitation. But Jesus came and touched the child with His life-giving hands, and he arose.

We are left to imagine the joy of the father and the gratitude of the son. We know that the cure was permanent, for Jesus had charged the demon to enter no more into him. That was a remarkable day in the history of that nameless family, when the youth re-entered the home of his childhood, in the possession of restored health and reason,—clothed and in his right mind. The multitude are amazed at the mighty power of God; and we hear no more of the scribes or their questionings. But the disciples are ill at ease. They can not yet understand why they could not cure the child. They therefore come to Jesus apart from the multitude, and ask Him, “Why could not we cast him out?” Our Lord’s answer to this question is one of those memorable utterances, containing abysses of truth which ages of thoughtful investigation can not fully explore; “Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” “Howbeit, this kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting.” As if He had said to them; “Your weakness, of which your failure to cure the demoniac is a mortifying proof, arises from your unbelief. This is indeed a difficult case; but the smallest degree of true, living faith, even though no larger than a grain of mustard seed, can, if like the mustard seed it have a principle of life and growth in it, surmount all difficulties, can even triumph over natural impossibilities; it can do

all things. This last miracle required an extraordinary degree of faith; but even this you could have attained by prayer and fasting."

That prayer should be necessary to the highest faith, is obvious of itself. But why is fasting demanded? Does our Lord intend to recommend an ascetic life? Certainly not as in itself a virtue. There is nothing meritorious in abstaining from meat and drink. But this abstemiousness, this self-mortification, is important as a means of self-discipline. As such, our Lord commends it; nay, indirectly enjoins it. Faith is a highly spiritual act, and the soul can not rise to a spiritual state, while immersed in the flesh, while suffocated with animalism. He who lives a carnal, worldly life, following the desires of the flesh and the mind, putting no check upon the passions, yielding to every sensual impulse, is incapable of faith. And this alone accounts for the unbelief, the infidelity of multitudes. It is only as the flesh with its affections is mortified, it is only as the sensual is cast out and crucified, and the body made the temple of the Holy Ghost, that the vision of the soul is clarified, that it is uplifted into a purer and more invigorating atmosphere, that it is made free to lay hold upon the divine fulness and strength.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET JOURNEY OF CHRIST THROUGH GALILEE.

REASONS FOR THE SECRECY OF OUR LORD'S JOURNEY THROUGH GALILEE—
HE AGAIN FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION—THE TRIBUTE
MONEY—DESIGN OF THE MIRACLE—HE REBUKES THE JEALOUSY AND
AMBITION OF THE DISCIPLES—THE LESSON ON FORGIVENESS—PARABLE
OF THE DEBTOR.

MATTHEW XVII. 22-27; XVIII. 1-35. MARK IX. 30-50. LUKE IX. 43-50.

THE enemies of Jesus were numerous, implacable and sleepless. Their hostility had taken the form of a conspiracy, the ramifications of which extended throughout the principal cities of the Holy Land. Everywhere except in the secluded rural villages our Lord encountered determined opposition. His persecutors had a difficult part to play, and they were by no means wanting in courage and skill. Their first aim was to bring Him into discredit with the people as a heretic, a blasphemer and a demoniac; their second, to fasten upon Him the suspicion of the Roman authorities, as a disturber of the public peace and as a revolutionary leader; their final aim was by one means or another, to bring about His death. Doubtless He was at this time, and He knew that He was, in constant danger of assassination. Indeed, when we consider the situation, we almost wonder that He so long escaped the dagger of the zealot. But He knew what was in man; and by His matchless prudence He foiled the cunning and thwarted the machina-

tions of His blood-thirsty foes. He replied to their ensnaring questions with such consummate wisdom that, far from eliciting anything by which He was compromised with the people on the one hand, or their rulers on the other, those questions returned to plague the inventors. As the peril to His person increased, He withdrew Himself more and more from Capernaum and the neighboring cities, and, concealing as much as possible His movements, spent much of the time among the rude but unprejudiced and hospitable peasants of Upper Galilee and Decapolis. Hence His journey beyond the borders, narrated in a former chapter.* Hence, too, His journey to Cesarea Philippi. And hence when He returned from that region, He took measures to prevent its being generally known.† He must therefore have traveled by unfrequented by-roads. Thus He guarded against the dangers by which He was encompassed.

Though Jesus knew that His time was not yet come, He knew that it was near; and His great work henceforth was to prepare His disciples for His sufferings and death. Again and again had He forewarned them of the fearful events which were approaching; but with amazing stupidity they had failed to understand His words. While they believed that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, they could not quite extricate themselves from the Jewish conception of the Messiah—a conception which excluded suffering and humiliation. Once more, on this journey, Jesus endeavored to remove their erroneous notions. “Let these sayings,” said He, “sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed He shall rise the third day.” This seems sufficiently explicit; but they under-

* Chapter IV., Part VII.

† Mark ix. 30.

stood it not. Could they have thought that it was a parable?

Again our Lord is in Capernaum. The circumstances which rendered it safe and expedient for Him to return are not recorded. Probably during His absence the rage of His enemies had somewhat subsided; and now His sudden appearance found them unprepared to carry their plans into effect. It was at this time that Jesus wrought a miracle which has perplexed and stumbled many commentators. It has been preserved by Matthew alone, and can be best narrated in his own words: "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute-money came to Peter and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take and give unto them for Me and thee."

That a miracle should have been wrought for such a purpose seems to many incredible. The sole difficulty in the case lies in an entire misconception of the purpose of the miracle. Surely, He who would not change stones into bread to appease His hunger in the desert, would not work a miracle to relieve Himself of a trifling pecuniary embarrassment; and there is not the slightest evidence that our Lord and His disciples were in such straits that they were unable to raise a single stater. It must also be noted that the "tribute" spoken of was not a civil capitation tax to be paid to the publicans; but a

tax paid annually by the Jews of twenty years and upwards, towards the temple in Jerusalem.* This fact is the key to the whole narrative. When Peter, having with his usual haste pledged his Master to pay the tax, came into the house, Jesus anticipated what he was about to tell Him with the question, "Of whom do *the kings of the earth* (in implied contrast with THE KING OF HEAVEN) receive custom or tribute? of their own children or of strangers?" Peter having answered, "Of strangers," Jesus rejoined, "Then are the children free." The conclusion rather suggested than expressed, was, "On the same principle, THE SON OF THE KING OF KINGS,—He who is above the temple and is Himself the true temple,—is exempt from a tax levied for the temple. As a Son over the house of God, He is free." Jesus thus asserted to the disciples, and especially to Peter, who had so recently confessed Him as the Son of the living God, His divine dignity. But inasmuch as Peter had already engaged for Him that the tax should be paid, He would not refuse, lest He should thereby cause any to stumble, as if He were a despiser of the temple. On the other hand, if the tax were paid out of the treasury of the little community, the disciples themselves might not be duly impressed with His superiority to the temple. Therefore the tax was paid in a way that displayed His divine knowledge, power and providence. The miracle was wrought to prove that He was the Son of God; and it was precisely such a miracle as Matthew, the tax-gatherer, would be sure to record.

That there was really a fish that had a stater lodged in its throat, there can be no doubt. *That* was not a miracle. The miracle lay in our Lord's knowledge that that particular fish would, at a certain moment, seize

* Exodus xxx. 13. II. Kings xii. 4. II. Chronicles xxiv. 6, 9.

the hook let down by Peter. Or shall we say, that the Divine Will, which pervades all nature, impelled the fish to that spot and to that act? In any case there was no violation of natural laws; neither was there anything magical in what was done. And we have seen that the miracle was wrought for the highest conceivable end. It was a fresh and striking fulfilment of the wondrous Messianic psalm:* “Thou hast made [the Son of man] a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned Him with glory and honor. Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under His feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.”

It seems probable that the honor which Jesus had recently bestowed on Peter, and on the two sons of Zebedee, excited the jealousy of the other disciples. Certainly there was much disputing among them, who should be the greatest. At length they (who were so often afraid to ask the Master legitimate and important questions) came to Him with the impertinent and incredible question: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Our Lord’s answer to this question was so marvelously beautiful and instructive—it reveals so clearly His inmost spirit, and the inmost spirit of His gospel, that we can not regret that the disciples so far forgot themselves as to ask it. Jesus was sitting in “*the house*”—that is to say, in the humble dwelling which was His abode in Capernaum. There happened to be in the room a little child, whom Jesus called to Him, and took up in His arms, and set in a conspicuous place among them. “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

* Psalms viii 5–8.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whosoever shall receive one such child in My name, receiveth Me." This dispute concerning the primacy was the first manifestation of the hierarchical spirit in the church. The apostles having been told that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, thought it high time to come to some understanding touching the distribution of honors and dignities in that kingdom. Clearly they did not understand that our Lord had designated Peter as the primate; in that case the dispute could not have arisen. And it is to be noted that Jesus Himself, in answering their question, does not intimate that He had chosen Peter to that honor; but on the contrary cuts up the principle of hierarchical lordship, root and branch, and shows that, in respect to official relations, His kingdom would present a sharp contrast to the spirit of the world. In holding up a little child as representing the qualities requisite to admission into His kingdom, and to greatness therein, Jesus teaches that true religion is a glorified infancy; that is to say, it is a development of the faith, hope and love which are implanted in infants by the covenant-grace of God; and that conversion lies in a return to the simplicity, trustfulness, lowliness and docility of a regenerate childhood. He says in effect to the apostles: "You are disputing among yourselves who shall be greatest in My kingdom, when it is doubtful whether you are qualified even to enter it. Behold this child, so obedient to my call, so confiding, so unambitious, so loving; this is a model disciple. If you would be great in my kingdom, renounce first all your pride and jealousy and lust for preëminence, and become as this little child."

Having entered the kingdom of God by becoming a child, one can only become great in that kingdom by becoming still more a child. "Whosoever shall humble

himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The man who *seeks* greatness—who covets distinction and power—shall be disappointed; but he who forgets himself and renounces the honor which comes from men, and becomes the least of all and the servant of all, shall fill the highest place. The Saviour further declares that those who are eminently childlike are His accredited representatives and ambassadors. His vicegerent on earth, is—not a potentate with a triple crown—but a little child—one who has renounced the world and is lowly in heart, and desires only to serve, and is full of love. Those who receive such a meek-hearted child of God in Christ's name, receive Him. It is in such child-like disciples that Christ dwells; through them He governs His church; through them He will govern the world; and they shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Our Lord goes on to erect on this deep and broad foundation the whole superstructure of church government and discipline, discoursing at length on offences; on the means to be employed to remove them; on the authority of orderly discipline in His church; on the duty of mutual forgiveness. Though this discourse of our Lord is one of the most interesting and important that He ever uttered, the exposition of it does not fall within the scope of this book. The parable however, with which it closes, must not be omitted:

"Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king who would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not

to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, who owed him a hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

REASONS FOR OUR LORD'S CONTINUANCE IN GALILEE—THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES—JESUS URGED TO ATTEND THE FEAST BY THE DISCIPLES—OUR LORD'S REPLY—THE MULTITUDE INQUIRE AFTER JESUS AND RECOUNT HIS MIRACLES—JESUS SUDDENLY APPEARS AND BEGINS TO TEACH—THE ASTONISHMENT OF THE PEOPLE AT HIS TEACHING—JESUS JUSTIFIES HIMSELF—HIS ENEMIES TAKE OFFENCE—HE REBUKES THEM—THE PHARISEES SILENCED AND THE PEOPLE PERPLEXED—JESUS DECLARES THEM IGNORANT OF HIM—THE SANHEDRIM GIVE ORDERS TO ARREST HIM—HE CONTINUES HIS DISCOURSE.

JOHN VII. 1-36.

JESUS had now been in Galilee, according to the most probable reckoning, about eighteen months. This long absence from Jerusalem is to be attributed to the malice of His enemies there. During His last visit He had so shocked their superstitious prejudices, by healing the sick man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day, and by His discourse on that occasion, that they had resolved to put Him out of the way. In executing their plans, they were able to wield the whole strength of the sect of Pharisees, and consequently that of the priesthood and the Sanhedrim. These had their emissaries scattered over the whole land, and especially throughout Galilee, who seem to have followed our Lord from place to place, and to have reported to the authorities at Jerusalem, all His works and sayings,—colored, of course, by prejudice and hatred. The Pharisees evidently felt that it was a death-struggle, that they must destroy Him or He would

destroy them. They were alarmed at His growing popularity with the masses, all of whom believed Him to be a prophet, many even that He was the Messiah. In Galilee especially, the common people honored and revered Him. Hence His enemies were afraid to offer Him any open insult or violence, while He continued in that region. Their purpose was to lay hands on Him at Jerusalem, while He was in attendance upon some festival; for even they could not deny that He strictly observed the law.

Several feasts had now gone by, and Jesus had not appeared. He well knew that His next journey would be full of danger; and He therefore abode still in Galilee. Not that He shrank from His final sufferings, for He was straitened till His baptism of blood was accomplished. But His preparatory work was not yet finished; His disciples needed further instruction and training; He had not fulfilled His course; His time was not yet come. He, therefore, used every precaution suggested by prudence, to escape the blood-thirsty rage of His enemies. Thus, they looked for Him feast after feast in vain. One of the principal Mosaic festivals was now at hand. The great Lawgiver had commanded that, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, corresponding to the first of our October, the people should keep a feast unto the Lord seven days, including two Sabbaths. "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year; it shall be a statute forever in your generations. Ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths; that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel

to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”*

This festival was the most joyous of all those observed among the Jews. It was held at a season when the intense heat of summer had passed, and the rains of autumn had not yet commenced; when, therefore, in that glorious climate, the people could surely reckon upon cloudless skies and a salubrious air. When the time approached, the whole country was astir. Caravans were seen moving toward Jerusalem, from every part of the Holy Land, and even from distant countries; for in the time of Christ the Jews were already scattered throughout the world. There is abundant evidence that, at every important festival, black Jews from India and Abyssinia met with their white brethren from Greece and Italy, perhaps from Gaul and Spain. At this feast, all the open spaces in and around the city for miles, hills and valleys, streets, fields, vineyards and gardens, must have been filled with booths, all crowded with people. The sound of a mighty population, and of a mighty joy filled the air. Music and song sounded forth on every side; all the dialects of the earth were heard in the streets. An unbroken stream of people was continually flowing to and from the courts of the temple. The smoke of sacrifice ascended without intermission.

Such was the Feast of Tabernacles. As the time drew near, the “*brethren*,” or relatives of our Lord urged Him to go up to Jerusalem. The reason they gave, discloses an extraordinary state of mind in those who ought to have known Him so well. “Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man who doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly.

* Leviticus xxiii. 39-43.

If thou do these things, show thyself to the world." We detect in these words a certain degree of irony, yet unmingled with scorn or malice. They did not *believe* in Him; yet they did not absolutely and wickedly disbelieve. They were in a state of *doubt*; but they seem to have doubted as much in His favor as against Him. They were looking for some *overpowering* evidence which should convince, not only themselves, but also the whole nation. He had now nominal disciples scattered all over the nation. Why did He not go up to Jerusalem, where all these would be assembled at the feast, and work some illustrious miracle which should silence all objectors? As if they had said to Him: "Why do you stay in such a corner as Galilee? Why do you not seek the widest publicity, by going up to this feast, and challenging the observation and scrutiny of the congregated nation?"

It must not be forgotten that these "brethren of Christ."—James, and Joses, and Judas and Simon, had recently attempted to arrest Him as a lunatic,* or perhaps as a monomaniac; but it would seem that their views had somewhat changed since then. They could not now think Him insane; neither could they believe in Him. How could they, with their carnal views be convinced that He, who had perhaps eaten at the same table, and worked with them in the same carpenter's shop for thirty years, was the Son of God and the consolation of Israel? It is nothing new or strange in this world that men, though in continual contact with the Divine, should be unable to recognize it. Is not the Divine word manifest in trees and grass and flowers, in air and clouds, in sun, moon and stars? Does He not live through all life, and extend through all extent, without being recognized by men? Think it not strange that those who knew not God in nature should

* Mark iii. 21.

fail to discover His presence in the form of a servant. Yet it was something that they earnestly desired Jesus to go up to Jerusalem and there manifest His power.

“My time,” said our Lord in reply, “is not yet come; but your time is always ready. The world can not hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up to this feast; I go not *yet* up to this feast, for My time is not yet full come.” “*You* are at liberty to dispose of your time according to your best judgment; but I am acting under divine dictation. My time is appointed of my Father, and I can not *yet* go up to Jerusalem. Besides, in your case there is no danger; for the world does not thirst for your blood; but I am continually exposed to the machinations and violence of sleepless enemies. Therefore, go up to the feast, and when my time has come, I will go up.” His brethren departed, doubtless more than ever at a loss what to think.

The feast has now opened; booths have covered the parched hills and valleys with sudden verdure; every where there is mirth and gladness, “thanksgiving and the voice of melody.” And yet the feast is not the absorbing theme. In the vast multitude, there is one topic of conversation—a topic of supreme interest. All are inquiring concerning Jesus the Nazarene. His alert and vigilant adversaries, the Pharisees, are looking around for Him; expecting Him at the feast, they hope to see their long cherished purpose put in execution. So the question goes round: “*Where is He? Where is He? Have you heard of His being in the city?*” Many call Him an impostor; but there are not wanting those who boldly and generously defend Him, and declare that He is no deceiver, but a good man and a prophet. Doubtless many whom He has healed of divers diseases are present, telling the story of their cure. Here is a man, surrounded by a crowd of eager listeners, who says, “I was

a leper; driven away from wife and children and home; my flesh was white and ulcerated from the crown of my head to my feet; my life was a burden, till I heard that Jesus of Nazareth could heal all manner of disease; and I went to Him, and kneeled down at His feet, and said to Him: 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean;' and He put forth His hand, and said to me: 'I will, be thou clean;' and immediately I felt new life rushing through my veins, and my flesh came upon me like the flesh of a child." Yonder is a man addressing another cluster: "I was blind. For long years I had not seen the light of the sun, nor the green grass, nor trees, nor flowers, nor the face of man or woman. One day, as I sat by the way-side, I heard the sound of a great multitude; and they told me that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And I cried aloud, and my heart was in the cry,—'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!' Blind as I was, I arose and followed Him into a house, and then He asked—methought it was the sweetest voice that ever mortal heard,—'Believest thou that I am able to do this?' And when I said: 'Yea, Lord,' He touched my sightless eyes, and they were opened, and I saw Him, and never shall I forget the glory and love that beamed upon me from His face."

In another place, there is a man speaking to yet another crowd: "A few months ago, I was a wild maniac in Gadara. I dwelt among the tombs, day and night, and none came near me for fear; and I howled like a wild beast, and cut myself with stones, as you may see from these scars. One day I saw a little ship approaching the shore, and I was filled with rage, and ran toward the men who came out of the ship to drive them back; but when I came near, I saw among them One with a face so gentle and Godlike, that I grew calm in His presence; He rebuked the demons that tormented me, and they departed;

and I sat down at His feet and loved and worshiped Him, for I knew He was the Son of God." Yonder is another witness: "I am the only son of my mother, and she is a widow. A few months ago disease came upon me; and I died in my mother's arms;—yes, I know the secrets of the under-world. How long a time I was there I know not; but suddenly a mighty voice summoned me back to my body; and I opened my eyes, and found myself on a bier, in grave-clothes, with mourners around me. But I could not see them, for the face of Jesus the Nazarene was bending over me,—and Oh!—the glory of God was in that face." Still farther on, within a booth, is a little knot of women, one of whom, in a low, sweet voice, is saying: "For twelve long years I was a miserable invalid. I consulted many physicians, and spent all my property in the purchase of medicines, and instead of being healed, I found my malady increasing year after year. At last I heard of Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth; but I was afraid to tell Him of my malady; and so I mingled in the crowd which followed Him, and drew nigh and touched, as if by chance, the hem of His garment; and I felt in a moment that I was healed; and when He turned and looked at me, I fell down and told Him all, and He sent me away with words of comfort. O sisters, is not this the Christ?" In another tent, where there is every sign of rank and wealth, a young girl, just budding into womanhood, is saying to her father: "Father, is Jesus, the good Nazarene, at the feast? I shall never forget how glorious He looked when I opened my eyes from that death-sleep in my chamber, as I heard the voice, 'Maid, I say unto thee arise.' O father, He must be the Son of God." There is a man in the garb of a sailor: "Were you speaking of Jesus of Nazareth? I know that He is more than mortal. Not long since I was crossing the Sea of Galilee in our little boat, and Jesus with His disciples

was on board; and there arose a terrible gale, and we were in danger of going to the bottom, when Jesus, who had been sleeping, looked out upon the angry waves, and said, 'Peace, be still,' and in a moment all was calm."

Conversations like these, containing reports of our Lord's miracles, must have been heard everywhere, and must have filled the public mind; hence there was a burning curiosity to see Him and hear His words. There was evidently a strong popular feeling in His favor, and that feeling would probably be increased by such conversations, for we must suppose that many witnesses of His wonderful works were in attendance on the feast. This was probably the reason why our Lord judged it prudent to delay His coming, till there should be created among the multitude at Jerusalem, such an enthusiasm as had made His residence safe in Galilee. Not till the middle or the fourth day did Jesus make His appearance at Jerusalem. He then came up from Galilee secretly; and suddenly entering the temple, began to teach. The form of the expression in the original intimates that He delivered a set and formal discourse, perhaps in the synagogue which stood in the court of the women.

The people were wonder-struck at His preaching, and said: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" They were accustomed to regard the rabbins as the source of all religious knowledge, so much so that the scribes in their ordinary teaching, said nothing on their own authority, but always referred to the rabbins as their acknowledged masters. But here was a Man who had never been in any school, who not only expounded the law and the prophets, but also uttered original doctrines on His own authority; whose wonted formula was not "Rabbi Jonathan, or Rabbi Simeon said so and so," but "verily, verily, *I say unto you.*" And then, there was a grace and a majesty in His teachings,

which no rabbi or scribe ever possessed. Whence had He these wonderful doctrines and this divine eloquence? Jesus expressly declared to them, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me." And He gave them a criterion by which to judge of His teachings. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him."

These words excited the rage of His old enemies, some of whom were present. They heard Him proclaim Himself publicly a Teacher sent from God, free from all error and sin; and what was even more intolerable, He distinctly declared that if any did not believe His teaching, it was because they were not obedient to the will of God. Our Lord saw their rage; but instead of softening His language, He spoke with yet greater severity: "Did not Moses give you the law; and yet none of you keepeth the law? why go ye about to kill Me?" "You glory in the law of Moses, and boast of your obedience thereto; yet at this moment you are plotting my murder, in the face of the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill.' Is it *thus* that you keep the law?" This was a home-thrust; they saw that He had penetrated their murderous designs, and they made haste to deny the charge, lest the people should credit it: "Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?" "You are a maniac; you mistake your own insane impressions for realities. This idea, that there is a plot against your life, is a figment of your own disordered fancy."

Taking no notice of their language, equally insulting and crafty, our Lord at once reverts to their controversy with Him eighteen months before, at the Feast of Dedication, on which occasion they had accused him of Sabbath-

breaking, because He had healed the impotent man on the Sabbath day. "I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses gave you circumcision, not indeed because it was of Moses, but of the fathers; and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at Me because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day? Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." This was unanswerable. Surely, to heal a sick man on the Sabbath was as justifiable as to perform the rite of circumcision; and *that* was acknowledged by all to be lawful, and even obligatory.

The Pharisees did not attempt to reply. Their silence, and especially their inaction, was a cause of some perplexity to the people. "Why is it?" they begin to say within themselves, "Is not this He whom they seek to kill? But lo, He speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" "The Pharisees are very bold in His absence, but they are speechless in His presence. Is it possible that they have a secret conviction, after all, that He is the true Messiah?" "Howbeit, *we* know this man whence He is; but when Christ cometh no man knoweth whence He is." This man is from Nazareth, in Galilee; but the Christ will come suddenly, no man can tell how or whence. This, it seems, was a popular delusion, utterly without warrant from the prophets. Our Lord understanding what they were saying, acknowledged that it was true, in a certain sense, that they knew whence He came, and yet they knew not: "Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am; and I am not come of myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not." They knew Him according to the flesh; they knew Him as the son of Joseph and Mary, they knew He had been a carpenter at

Nazareth, but His *true generation they could not declare*; they knew not He was the incarnate Son of the living God, and that *as such*, He was the Lord from heaven. "Thus does He return to the principle that only those who know God, and belong to Him in heart, (i. e., who really endeavor to do His will,) can be in a condition to recognize the law of God in His self-manifestation, and to acknowledge that He is from heaven. Those who are estranged from God, and slaves to sense, *think* they know Him, but in fact do not.*

Our Lord's words were favorably received by the people: "When Christ cometh," said they, "will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" His enemies, however, irritated by these expressions of the popular good-will toward Jesus, sought to seize Him. Orders appear to have been issued by the chief priests and Pharisees to have Him arrested, though they were not carried into immediate effect. Aware of these facts, Jesus seizes upon them, and with so bold and direct an allusion as must for the moment have confounded His adversaries. "You seek to rid yourselves of Me by lawless violence. You shall have your wish. 'Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto the Father.' But you will succeed to your sorrow. When I am gone, and when it is too late, 'Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am thither ye can not come.' Ye shall seek the Christ whom you now reject; you shall long look and anxiously wait for Him; but all in vain." These words were a riddle to the multitude: "Whither will He go," say they, "that we shall not find Him? Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this, that He said, Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me, and where I am thither ye can not

* Neander's "Life of Christ," page 293.

come?" O ye blind, unbelieving hearts! Ye shall understand these words, after ye have imbrued your hands in the blood of your King, and He shall have ascended to His throne in heaven. For eighteen hundred years ye have sought your King, and have not found Him; but ye shall see Him when He cometh in the clouds, and shall wail because of Him.*

* Revelations i. 7.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES—CONTINUED.

THE LAST DAY OF THE FEAST—JESUS DECLARES HIMSELF THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE—THE MULTITUDE CONVINCED, AND THE OFFICERS OF THE SANHEDRIM DISARMED—THE SANHEDRIM IN SESSION—THEY REBUKE THE OFFICERS AND REVILE NICODEMUS—JESUS DECLARES HIMSELF THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—CLOSING DISPUTE WITH THE JEWS—THEY BECOME ENRAGED AND TRY TO STONE HIM—HE ESCAPES.

JOHN VII. 37-52; VIII. 12-59.

OUR history now brings us to the last, the great day of the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the Sabbath. At an early hour, the people leave their tents, bearing in their hands branches of palm, olive, citron, myrtle, and willow, and crying: "Hosanna, save I beseech thee."* It must have been a grand and imposing spectacle, to see hundreds of thousands moving with loud jubilation towards the temple. In the temple itself, the pomp of dreadful sacrifice meets their eyes; and while the very walls are shaken with the sound of trumpets and cymbals, of harps and psalteries, of stringed instruments and organs, of timbrels and shawms, they commence their solemn yet joyous procession around the great altar. Seven times, led by the priests and Levites, they make the circuit of the altar,

"And the tumult of their acclaim is rolled
Through the open gates of the city afar;"

and the echoes of the mighty joy stir the groves and vineyards of Mount Olivet, and reverberate among the rocks far down the valley of Jehoshaphat.

It was a grand and thrilling moment, when the priests,—we learn this from the rabbins,—drew water from the fountain of Siloam,—which was in the temple-mount “fast by the oracle of God,”—in a golden vessel, singing the words of Isaiah, “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.”* And the spectacle must have been still more impressive, when towards evening, the two immense chandeliers which hung in the court of the women were lighted up, and flooded the whole temple area with dazzling splendor. These ceremonies had a profound spiritual significance of which the priest and the people were alike ignorant, but which our Lord knew and employed with wonderful beauty and effect in the continuation of His discourse. It was, we conjecture, either just before, or immediately after the water was poured from the golden vessel upon the altar, that Jesus stood and cried, saying, “If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;”—language wonderfully suggestive of the overflowing fulness of the life that is in Jesus, and which was to revive and clothe with beauty a parched and dying world. “This He spake of the spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.” †

These words fell with unwonted power on the ears of the multitude. Some indeed still cavilled and raised

* Isaiah xii. 3.

† The note of the evangelist on these words of Christ is of great importance to the right understanding of the gift of the Holy Ghost in its relation to the incarnation. “This spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, [Greek : *was not*,] because Jesus was not yet glorified,” (vii. 39.) The gift of the

objections to His being the Christ. But others, and it would seem the greater number, for no man dared lay hands on Him, said: "Of a truth this is the Prophet,"—"This is the Christ." Even the officers who had been sent to arrest Him, caught the general feeling, and were awe-struck and spell-bound by the majesty of the speaker, and the power of His divine eloquence. Meanwhile the chief priests and rulers continue to sit in conclave, expecting every moment that He would be brought before them. What a scene for the painter would that stone chamber have presented at that moment! There were priests in their sacred vestments, Pharisees with their broad phylacteries, scribes and rabbins, all sitting with lowering brows and stern, cruel resolve in every face. Did I say *all*? No,—there is at least *one* exception. Among the rulers is one of mild yet anxious and sorrowful countenance, who feels that a great crime is about to be perpetrated, yet who knows not how to prevent it. This is Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, and who is at heart a disciple, though he conceals it from his colleagues. There they sit waiting for their messengers to return, impatient and wrathful at their delay.

At last they come, but without a prisoner. "Why have ye not brought Him?" they ask. "Never man spake like this man," is the honest answer. They had been so subdued by His discourse that they found it impossible to arrest Him. "Are ye also deceived!" "Are ye, officers of the Sanhedrim, deceived also? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on Him? Has this heresy

Spirit is here represented as in some sense new, and as conditioned on the glorification of Christ's humanity. The explanation seems to be that the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, became by the incarnation and glorification of the Son, the Spirit of the *God-man*; and when poured out on the day of Pentecost, He imparted to the church the fulness and power of the Lord's divine human life. Thus the church became His *body*.

spread even to our own body? Are there traitors among ourselves?" Nicodemus now puts in a wise and just though timid word: "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him?" Is it just in you to condemn without an impartial trial? They turn upon him with a fierce look of suspicion and menace: "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." "What, are *you* a Galilean? Do you fraternize with this Nazarene prophet? We will have an eye upon you, Nicodemus. We know that no prophet comes from Galilee." Nicodemus does not reply. And so the session breaks up, and the rulers disperse.

The day was now well-nigh spent; and the twilight was coming on. It was probably when the great chandeliers were lighted in the temple-court, that Jesus cried, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The Pharisees answer Him, "Thou bearest record of Thyself, and Thy record is not true." Our Lord replies, boldly asserting the truthfulness of His record, and adding,—perhaps with the scene in mind which had just transpired in the Sanhedrim, and with which these Pharisees were acquainted,—“Ye judge after the flesh, I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and My Father are one.” Conscious that our Lord had penetrated the secrets of the conclave which had just been plotting against Him, they were abashed, and “no man laid hands on Him.”

The scene now takes upon itself a deeper and more exciting interest. The disputants become thoroughly aroused. Declaration and rejoinder follow each other in rapid succession, sometimes quick and sharp, like angry flashes of lightning. Our Lord, with a boldness awful and startling, probes the Jewish heart to the bottom, laying open all its unbelief and obduracy. Stung by the

truthfulness as well as the severity of His language, the Jews retort upon Him in terms the most bitter and insulting. Things are evidently drawing to a crisis. The tempest of passion which has been all day gathering in the heart of this excited and now angry multitude, must ere long burst upon the head of Jesus. Conscious of all this, He nevertheless continues His discourse. He begins by reannouncing His speedy departure; He reaffirms the utter incorrigibleness of the Jews; He again pronounces their doom: "Ye shall die in your sins, and whither I go ye can not come." His adversaries turn upon Him with the mocking query, "'Will He kill Himself?' does He intend to consign Himself to perdition by suicide, thus cutting us off from the power to join Him in a future state?" Paying no heed to their scoffing, Jesus presses the truth home still more closely, denouncing them as earthly and sensual, and declaring that it is because of this earthliness and their consequent unbelief, that they are condemned to death. They venture no reply, but meet Him with a new scoff: "Who art Thou?" "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning," is the reply, "and by virtue of the divine authority vested in Me, 'I have many things to say and to *judge* of you.'" Jesus then goes on to declare that His divine character and authority would eventually be recognized by the Jews themselves: "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *He*; and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things." The majesty of our Lord's manner, and the sublimity of the truth He uttered, carried conviction to the hearts of His hearers. "As He spake these words many believed on Him."

Turning now to the group of disciples and others who believed on Him, who would naturally gather immediately about His person, He proceeds to set forth the free-

dom to be found in true faith; the glorious liberty of the gospel: "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." His enemies, standing farther off, and perhaps not distinctly catching His language, understand it as a reflection upon themselves, as implying that they are in bondage. So they call out to Him, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." "I speak not of temporal bondage," answers Jesus, "but of spiritual bondage." "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin; is a slave to the devil. Whatever other freedom you possess, so long as you remain in this spiritual thralldom, it is nothing. As to your boast of your descent from Abraham, to what does it amount, so long as you have apostatized from the faith of Abraham, and show yourselves to be altogether a corrupt and degenerate stock? Your hearts are full of hatred and violence; you are even now seeking to kill Me; Abraham did no such things as these. Ye do the deeds of your father; but it is very evident that he is not Abraham." To this His enemies reply with indignation, as though He had charged upon them a vicious corruption of their very stock and blood: "We be not born of fornication," arrogantly adding, "we have one Father, even God." To this assumption, Jesus replies with terrible severity: "'If God were your Father, you would love Me,' which you evidently do not. Your assumption is utterly false. 'Ye are of your father the *devil*,' and the works of your father,—falschood and murder,—ye will do." This was too much to be endured. Exasperated to the utmost, the Jews angrily exclaimed, "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil." The reply of Jesus, though singularly calm, did not allay the intensity of their rage; they only reiterated the charge with increased violence, "Now we know thou hast a devil."

At this stage of the discourse, or rather dialogue, our Lord startled and thrilled His hearers with the words, not obviously connected with what had gone before: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying he shall never see death." This struck His enemies as so amazingly absurd that it was a sufficient proof of His insanity. "Now we know," said they, "that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham who is dead? and the prophets are dead; whom makest thou Thyself?" Jesus declaring that His honor was from God alone, and that He alone knew the Father and kept His sayings, continued: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." Oh, these blind Jews! not a glimmering ray of our Lord's meaning penetrated their minds. There was a sense, one would think, that even they might have apprehended, in which Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ; for the patriarch was largely endowed with prophetic foresight; they were, however, not only blind, but just now in an angry and evil-mood; hence they *would* understand Jesus as claiming that He had been contemporary with Abraham: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" The answer of Jesus has been, ever since it was uttered, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to all impugnors of His eternal divinity: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM." Had He merely said, "*Before Abraham was, I existed*," His hearers might have attributed the utterance to the disturbed consciousness of insanity; but when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," they regarded it as a monstrous blasphemy; for this was the very language of Him who dwelt in the bush. They understood Him, and rightly understood Him, to assert that He had a being above time and succession. Carried

away by mingled rage and horror, they took up stones to stone Him; and doubtless but for His sudden and unaccountable disappearance, ("He hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by,") He would have been slain on the spot.

We can not doubt that Jesus, on this occasion, gave deliberate expression to that consciousness of eternity which was immanent in His divine nature. Indeed, His words are the mysterious yet not irrational utterance of a Being who is at once God and man. In the first clause, "Before Abraham was,"—is expressed a human consciousness of time; but the next, "*I am*," rises at once above the laws of human thought into the region of the timeless and absolute, and is the sublime symbol rather than the adequate expression, of a self-consciousness to which one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day—a self-consciousness which embraces the ages—the eternities—in an unsuccessive and immovable now—a self-consciousness that ever dwelt in the Man Christ Jesus, and sometimes flashed forth in words of supernatural splendor and power.

CHAPTER X.

THE WOMAN ACCUSED BY THE PHARISEES.

THE PHARISEES BRING TO JESUS A WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY—THEIR MOTIVES—THEIR QUESTION—OUR LORD'S JUDGMENT—THEY RETIRE CONFOUNDED—THE WOMAN ADMONISHED AND DISMISSED—REFLECTIONS.

JOHN VII. 53; VIII. 1-12.

ON a certain morning, Jesus, having spent the night on the Mount of Olives, went early to the temple, and the people came flocking to Him, to hear His teaching.* His ubiquitous enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, were also there, on an extraordinary errand. A certain woman,—who is nameless,—had been detected in a flagrant breach of her marriage covenant, and led away for trial. Her accusers, equally void of humanity and shame, determined to take advantage of the sad incident to elicit from Jesus, if possible, a judgment opposed to the law of Moses. They knew with what tenderness our Lord had

* I assume that the discourse of our Lord, recorded John viii. 12-59, was spoken on the last day of the feast, in connection with that recorded in chapter vii. 37-52, and that the story of the adulteress (vii. 53; viii. 1-11,) is here *out of place*. Its *authenticity* is unquestionable; but it evidently belongs in another connection, *probably* at the close of Luke xxi. The question is rather fully discussed by Alford *in loco*, to whom the reader is referred. Stier, Ebrard, and some other eminent scholars, contend for the genuineness of the passage and for its correct location in John's gospel; but they have failed to convince me. In accordance with my rule, I follow in this difficult case what appears to me the best authority. Any discussion of the question in such a work as this would be out of place.

sometimes treated notorious sinners, and they confidently expected that in this case His compassion would lead Him to pronounce a mild decision. They led the woman through the streets in a sort of procession, exposing her, doubtless, to the ribald jeers of a prurient mob, and brought her into that part of the temple where Jesus sat teaching the people. It was an irruption of reeking sensuality, coarseness and hypocrisy. The holy place was at once filled with the very atmosphere of hell.

The accusers, without introduction or apology, declare in the broadest terms their infamous errand: "Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest Thou?" It was not true that Moses had commanded that the adulteress should be *stoned*; but he had commanded that both the adulterer and the adulteress should be *put to death*.* Why the accusers had only arrested *one* of the parties in this case, does not appear. The *woman* was seized; her probably more guilty paramour had been suffered to escape. Alas, a like unjust partiality in the treatment of the vicious has prevailed in all ages. Our Lord, thus interrupted in His heavenly discourse, feels the manifestations of human depravity, so suddenly forced upon His notice, like a wound. "The shame of the deed itself, and the brazen hardness of the prosecutors, the legality that had no justice and did not even pretend to have any mercy, the religious malice that could make its advantage of the ruin and ignominious death of a fellow-creature—all this was eagerly and rudely thrust before His mind. The effect upon Him was such as might have been produced upon many since, but perhaps upon scarcely any man that ever lived before. He was seized with an intolerable sense of shame. He

* Deuteronomy xxii. 22. Leviticus xx. 10.

could not meet the eye of the crowd, or of the accusers; perhaps of the woman least of all. To hide the glowing blush upon His face, He stooped down and began writing with His finger on the ground.”*

Perhaps this was also intended to signify to the people that this was a matter quite aside from His mission—a case with which He had no concern. But His enemies were resolved that He *should* pronounce a judgment; they continued to urge their question. And He gave them a judgment, but not such as they expected. Raising His head a moment, the flush of wounded purity and holy indignation still upon His face, He said simply: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” The words flashed an awful light into their consciences. They forgot the crime of this woman; they were compelled to look steadfastly *at their own sins*—sins probably of the same nature with hers—and in the presence of Purity they felt themselves vile and guilty. Their *secret sins were, then and there, set in the light of God’s countenance*. Confounded and smitten with terror, they began one after another to slink away from the place, till at length all had departed.

When Jesus saw the woman standing alone, He said to her: “Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her: Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.” These words present no such ethical difficulty as many of the ancient commentators found in them. Never was the sin of unchastity more fearfully judged and condemned than by our Lord on this occasion. He does not extenuate her guilt. But He was not sent to condemn but to save. He uniformly declined to act as a judge in temporal matters. He had not

* Ecce Homo, page 116.

received authority to act as a civil magistrate. Therefore He did not condemn her, but dismissed her with an admonition to sin no more. He probably saw in her the beginnings of true penitence; and we can not but hope that she went away to deplore, with godly sorrow, her great crime. Perhaps "society" never forgave her; but the gate of divine mercy was not closed against her. Perhaps even she is now a white-robed saint among the blessed in paradise. There is redemption in Christ for the fallen; and not less for fallen women than for others

CHAPTER XI.

JESUS HEALS THE BLIND MAN ON THE SABBATH.

THE DISCIPLES QUESTION JESUS AS TO THE BLIND MAN—OCCASION OF THEIR PERPLEXITY—OUR LORD'S REPLY—RELATION OF THE DIVINE PLAN TO THE CASE—JESUS HEALS THE BLIND MAN—WHY JESUS ANOINTED HIS EYES WITH CLAY—SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM SILOAM—THE BLIND MAN QUESTIONED BY HIS NEIGHBORS AND BY THE SANHEDRIM—THE PHARISEES QUESTION HIS PARENTS—THE BLIND MAN RE-EXAMINED—HE DEFENDS THE DIVINE CLAIM OF JESUS—HE IS CAST OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE BY THE PHARISEES—HIS SUBSEQUENT CONFERENCE WITH JESUS—REASONS FOR HEALING THE BLIND MAN ON THE SABBATH.

JOHN IX. 2-38.

As our Lord and His apostles passed out, they saw a man who was born blind. Probably he was a well-known beggar, whom they had often seen in the same place, and whose history was public. As they passed by, the disciples asked their Lord, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" This, it must be confessed, was an extraordinary question. If they had only asked, whether the affliction was caused by the sin of his parents, their words would have presented no difficulty; for we know in fact that the sins of parents are visited upon their children unto the third and fourth generation; but what could they have meant by asking whether the man's blindness was caused by his own sins? The apostles, in common with all right-minded men, instinctively believed that a connection existed between sin and suffering; but the trouble was, that they could conceive of no sin which was not an individual transgression.

of the divine law. They could not conceive of a depraved organic life, a corrupt nature in the *race itself*. They stood upon the ground occupied by all superficial theologians, that all sin is *actual*, and holding at the same time that all natural evil is caused by sin, this case of congenital blindness presented a difficulty which they could not solve. Had they understood the doctrine of original sin, as set forth afterwards by the apostle Paul, and held by orthodox Christians in subsequent ages, they would neither have felt the difficulty nor asked the question.

But how could they think it possible that the actual sins of the man himself could have been the cause of his blindness when he was *born* blind? The true answer is probably this: they had heard of the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls, and perhaps partly believed it; and they thought that this affliction might have been a judgment upon him for his sins in an ante-natal life. This doctrine had long been current among the heathen. Pythagoras had borrowed the doctrine of the transmigration of souls from the eastern sages, many years before this time, and it is altogether credible that it had long been familiar to the Jews. There is positive evidence that it was held by the Pharisees, though some think they had not embraced it in the time of Christ. But there is reason to believe that it was already a settled article of their creed. This we may infer from their own words to this very man, after he was healed: "Thou wast altogether born in sins." This interpretation is unforced and simple; and is supported by many eminent commentators, ancient and modern.

Our Lord, in His reply, only declared so much truth as the disciples were qualified to receive. "Neither hath *this* man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be manifest in him." We are not to understand this as a denial of the connection between sin and

suffering in general,—a truth which our Lord on other occasions plainly declared; but He tells them that the *personal transgressions* of this man and his parents had nothing to do with his affliction. In this particular case, a merciful purpose was to be answered. This man was preërdained to be a medium of showing forth the mighty works of God. The Lord neither denies the sin of the blind man nor that of his parents; all that He does is to turn away His disciples from that most harmful practice of diving down with cruel surmises into the secret of other men's lives, and like the friends of Job, assuming hidden sins to be the cause of their unusual sufferings. "This blindness," He would say, "is due to no *peculiar* sin on his own part, or that of his parents. Seek, therefore, neither here nor there for the cause of his calamity; but see what more just and merciful explanation the evil in the world, and this evil in particular, is capable of receiving. The purpose of the life-long blindness of this man is that the works of God should be manifest in him; and that, through it and its removal, the grace and glory of God might be magnified."

The words of Christ immediately following refer to the short duration of His earthly ministry: "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." Passing from this, He adds with particular reference to the healing of the blind man: "As long as I am in the world *I am the light of the world.*" Having thus said, "He spat upon the ground and made clay of the saliva, and applied the mixture to the eyes of the blind man, and directed him to go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and he went his way and washed and came seeing." It were vain to try to imagine the sensations of one who had been blind from birth, upon finding himself suddenly gifted with sight. The ideas of the external world possessed by such a person

must be dim and contracted beyond our conception ; but we may well imagine his rapture upon passing from ever-during darkness into a world of light and color, of form and visible motion. What a revelation would be the distant horizon, the far-off mountains, fruitful valleys stretching away till lost in the blue haze, azure streams winding like threads of silver among hills and meadows, vineyards and gardens, mists and exhalations, summer showers and dew-drops of the morning, or the sight of the firmament with its vast spaces, its clouds, rainbows, stars ! Oh what a revelation were all this to a soul under total eclipse from the moment of birth ! Such was the change in the blind man's condition. Yet it was not this which the man came *seeing* ; what he most longed to behold, after his eyes were opened, must have been, not so much the beauty and "dread magnificence" of nature, as the face of Him who had said : "*Go wash in the pool of Siloam !*" True, we are not told whether he saw Jesus as he returned ; but we are sure he must have hastened home to look upon the faces of those he loved most.

It has been made a question, why our Lord, first anointed his eyes with clay, and then sent him to the pool of Siloam to wash. Why did He not rather heal him with a word ? Doubtless, He could have healed him thus ; but we can discern a wise reason why another method was chosen. An indispensable condition of such miraculous cures was a certain degree of faith in the subject. Now it is probable that the faith of this man was very weak, and some external aids were necessary to raise it to the requisite pitch. Our Lord, therefore, applied the clay mixed with saliva, both of which were imagined in that age to be medicinal in diseases of the eyes. The use of these suggested to the man first, the *possibility* of a cure, and then led him to believe that he *would* be cured. The command to wash in the pool of Siloam was

well calculated to try and *manifest* his faith. The evangelist alludes, not accidentally, but with a design, to the meaning of the name Siloam: "which is by interpretation SENT." In this, he probably intimates that the fountain was a type of Christ, and was named *prophetically*. Our Lord is expressly called the Apostle,—that is to say, the Messenger, the SENT of God; and thus He often speaks of Himself. The waters of Siloam, gushing out from beneath the very substructions of the *temple*,—which was the type of Christ's humanity,—were a striking symbol of that life-giving grace which flows forth from the incarnate Word, to make glad the city of God, and to refresh, quicken and sanctify the world.

When the man returned from Siloam, in the possession of sight, his neighbors were of course astonished, and could hardly believe it was he. Sight naturally changed the expression of his countenance; and they could not help saying one to another, "Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said it is he; others said he is like him; but he said *I am he*. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash; and I went and washed and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not." Here was a palpable miracle of the most extraordinary kind. It could not be overlooked, much less denied, so they brought the man to the Pharisees, by whom we are to understand the leaders of the sect, who were now probably sitting in the Sanhedrim. They immediately began to question him concerning his cure; and he gave the same account of it which he had before given to his neighbors. They viewed the miracle at once in the light of their own narrow prejudice and bigotry: "This man," they reasoned, "is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day." Some, however,

who were present were honest enough to say, "How can a man who is a sinner do such things?" Thus there was a division among them. They wish to know what the man himself thinks of Jesus. They say unto the blind man again, "What sayest thou of Him that He hath opened thine eyes?" This must not be understood as two questions,—thus, *What sayest thou of Him? that He hath opened thine eyes?* The meaning rather is, *What sayest thou of Him in that He hath opened thine eyes?* What is your opinion of Him? What do you conclude in respect to His character from the cure you say He has wrought upon you? The man answers simply and well, "He is a prophet." He will soon find out that He is much more than a prophet.

The Pharisees, however, suspecting some collusion in the case, put the man aside for the present and calling his parents, asked: "Is this your son who, ye say, was born blind? How then doth he now see?" They answered, we think discreetly, though they have been blamed for undue timidity and caution: "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth, we know not, or who hath opened his eyes we know not; he is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself." They spoke in the character of *witnesses*, and what they ought to have said more, it is not easy to see. It is true they spoke thus guardedly because they feared the Jews; but their caution does not appear to have been criminal.

Failing to discover any evidence of imposture in the case, the Pharisees return to the man himself. "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." It is believed that this was a mere artifice of the examiners to surprise the man into a confession of the imposture which they suspected he was practising. He had been absent during the examination of his parents. When he

returned to the stand, they addressed him as though they had discovered the cheat, and exhorted him to *give glory to God*, as Joshua exhorted Achan,* by confessing the truth. If this was their purpose they signally failed, for the man boldly answered, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not,"—in respect to that I am not a competent witness,—“one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” This man evidently has a strong, genial soul, and we can not help liking him. Well, they can not shake his testimony; neither can they let him alone; they continue to interrogate him: “What did He to thee? How opened He thine eyes?” “I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? *Will ye also be His disciples?*” He begins to understand his position; he sees that he is among malicious enemies of his great Benefactor, and his heart is moved with indignation. “*One would think from your questioning that you were about to become His disciples.*”

These words stung them to the quick, and they answered with scorn, “Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; but as for this fellow we know not from whence he is.” “Why,” rejoined the man, suddenly transformed into a theologian, “Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners:”—that is to say, God hears not wicked men and deceivers, men who are in a *state of sin*,—“but if any be a worshiper of God and doeth His will, him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man were not of God he could do nothing.” Bravely and wisely spoken! The most learned rabbi of them all

* Joshua vii. 19.

could not have spoken as well. If such miracles do not demonstrate a mission from God, what evidence would be sufficient?

But the Pharisees were only enraged; they could not answer his arguments, but they could excommunicate him, which they proceeded forthwith to do. "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" Aye, there was the rub,—that this poor beggar, who had been blind from his birth, and was, therefore, as they reasoned, monstrously wicked, should presume to think for himself and even to teach them—"who rested in the law and made their boast of God, and knew His will and approved the things which were more excellent, being instructed out of the law, who accounted themselves guides of the blind, light to them who were in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes." This presumption in one who had come into the world with mysterious crimes clinging to him, was not to be tolerated, and so they cast him out, i. e., they violently ejected him from their hall of judgment, which was a symbol of his excision from the congregation.

He went out loaded with anathemas, delivered over unto Satan, and marked as an object of the abhorrence and execration of men. It does not appear, however, that he was greatly alarmed or distressed by this outrage; nevertheless he needed encouragement and counsel; and therefore Jesus, the Good Shepherd, ever mindful of the lambs, sought him out and "when He had found him He said unto Him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and he answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" He had the conviction that Jesus was a prophet come from God, but He did not yet know His divine dignity. "Jesus said unto him: Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He who talketh with thee. And he said: Lord, I believe, and he worshiped Him."

The eyes of this blind man are opened in more senses than one. He has seen the Lord not only with eyes of flesh but by faith. I have no doubt he has been telling his story in heaven for eighteen hundred years. Oh, that you and I may come near enough to the throne to hear him, and to join with him in singing, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

We observe that in healing the blind man on the Sabbath, our Lord again trampled on the superstitious prejudices of the Pharisees, or rather publicly rebuked and defied them. It is extraordinary that many of his most wonderful cures, both in Jerusalem and in Galilee, were performed on the Sabbath day. And this had come in fact to be the great controversy between Him and His opposers; He *would* work miracles of healing on the Sabbath, despite the rage and clamor of the Pharisees. Now why was this? We know how carefully He avoided giving needless offense even to the most ignorant and prejudiced. The fact was, the nature of true religion as consisting in mercy, judgment and faith, had almost faded away from the Jewish mind. The people had come to worship forms and positive institutions; their worship was without *love*, their religion was without humanity and *beneficence*. They kept the Sabbath, not by doing good to men, and worshiping God in spirit, but by scrupulously abstaining from all labor. They regarded the Sabbath with some such feelings of superstitious horror as a native of a South Sea island regards a *tabooed* tree or field. This feeling was diametrically opposed to the spirit of true religion. Our Lord came into the world to preach a gospel of *love*, to teach men by precept and example, that the highest acts of religion are acts of mercy; that the *spirit* is nobler and more essential than the *letter*.

From these striking scenes, our Lord, according to the

most satisfactory authorities, appears to have quietly withdrawn and to have returned to Galilee. His subsequent final departure from Galilee, of which explicit mention is made, can not well be understood on any other hypothesis. The evangelists are, however, silent, both as to the incidents of the journey and His labors while there.



PART VIII.

The Period of our Lord's
Ministry in Perea.

CHAPTER I.

FINAL DEPARTURE OF JESUS FROM GALILEE.

JESUS RETURNS TO GALILEE—SENDS MESSENGERS TO SAMARIA—REBUKES
THE “SONS OF THUNDER”—SENDS OUT THE SEVENTY—FOLLOWS THEM—
JESUS TEMPTED BY A LAWYER—PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LUKE IX. 51-52; X. 1-37.

JESUS was again in Galilee, but only for a little season. While many had become His disciples, He was by the majority, including the Pharisees and ecclesiastical rulers, rejected and persecuted. Knowing that His work among His ungrateful countrymen was almost finished, and that “the time was come when He should be received up,” He prepared to bid a final farewell to the scenes and places which had been so long hallowed by His presence. “He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem.” This journey, however, was to differ, in one important circumstance, from all that preceded it. Some of those had been made secretly; and in none of them had He publicly appeared as the King of Israel. The time had now come for Him to declare Himself in the most public manner as the Messiah. He therefore sent messengers in advance, to make ready for Him, in the cities and villages through which He intended to pass. Who these messengers were, and in what sense they were to prepare for His coming, is not recorded; but they were probably instructed to announce Him as THE KING so long promised and expected. We certainly can not accept the sug-

gestion that their sole business was to prepare lodgings for Him. This would have savored more of the soft and ease-loving temper of an earthly prince, than of the self-denial of the Son of man who had not where to lay His head. We rather incline to the opinion that these messengers were sent forth as the accredited heralds of the King, and that their mission was to call upon the people to receive Him gladly and do Him homage.

The messengers found the inhabitants of a certain Samaritan village inhospitable, if not positively hostile; they refused to receive the Lord, "because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem." Had it been His declared intention to worship at Mount Gerizim, they would doubtless have received Him with open arms.

When James and John, the "sons of thunder," exulting as they probably were in the belief that their Master was about to ascend the throne of David, saw the indignity which was offered Him by these Samaritan villagers, their anger was stirred, and they said to Jesus, "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did?" They alluded to the destruction by fire of the two companies sent by the dying Ahaziah to arrest the prophet Elijah.* They were carried away by a generous zeal, which however was not according to knowledge. Jesus therefore turned and rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." As if He had said, "Can you still be ignorant that the Spirit of my kingdom—that *Spirit to which you belong*—is not one of wrath and vengeance, but rather of gentleness, long-suffering and forgiveness? Elijah was a minister of fearful judgments to an idolatrous people; I am come, not to destroy, but to save."

*II. Kings i. 10, 12.

Having spoken these words, doubtless in the hearing of the Samaritans, Jesus meekly left them and sought repose in another village. This last may have been in Galilee. We conjecture that the two villages were near each other, on opposite sides of the line between the provinces. This rejection by the Samaritans was final; the Lord did not again visit them. It is very interesting, however, to know that the same John who desired to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans, afterwards went down to Samaria to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost on the Samaritan believers.*

It may have been one who had witnessed this very scene, that said to our Lord, as He was pursuing His way: "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever Thou goest." The reply of Jesus carries an allusion to His homeless and houseless state, just refused, as He had been, shelter for a night: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." That is to say, "If you will follow Me, you must renounce all hope of earthly ease and comfort; for I Myself am a houseless pilgrim and wanderer." To another He said, "Follow Me." The summons was sudden and peculiarly trying, for the person addressed had at home a father either at the point of death or already dead, to whom He felt bound by filial duty and affection: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." "Let the dead," Jesus rejoined, "bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Those who are dead in worldliness and sin are competent to bury their dead; that is their appropriate work; but you have to do, not with death, but with life; you are called to preach the glad tidings of salvation; enter at once on your mission." Another also said to Jesus, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me

* Acts viii. 14-17.

first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house." Even natural affection must be sacrificed, at this crisis, by the personal followers of the Lord. He is about to suffer and to be received up; and the work of preaching the kingdom of God must, during the next few weeks, be prosecuted with energy by a multitude of evangelists. Therefore He said to the hesitating disciple, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." He who has his hand on the plough must look *forward*, that his furrow may be in a right line; if he look behind, his work will be marred. The minister of the gospel, especially, whose business is *to plough*,—not seldom to break up fallow ground full of roots and stones,—must beware of a divided mind and of backward looks.

It is probable that our Lord, thus repelled from the borders of Samaria, determined to pass over the Jordan into Perea, where the people were less prejudiced and hostile than the inhabitants of Galilee and Judea. It is evident that He meditated, not a rapid journey, but a somewhat extended missionary tour; for it was at this time that He appointed "seventy others also, and sent them two and two, before His face, into every city and place whither He Himself would come." This mission of the seventy has been misunderstood and unduly magnified. It has been generally regarded, even by the most learned and judicious commentators, as in some degree apostolic in its design, as if the phrase "other seventy" carried an allusion to *the twelve* who were set apart to the highest ministry in the church. Such an interpretation is neither necessary nor eligible. The reader will remember that when Jesus steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem, He sent forward messengers to make ready for Him. The number of these messengers is not recorded, but it was probably small. When He turned

away from Samaria to go into Perea, His plan required that the number of His heralds should be increased; and He therefore appointed *seventy others*, to announce His coming in every place which He intended to visit. Their mission was special and temporary, continuing perhaps not more than two or three days. They would probably be able to visit thirty-five or forty villages in a single day; and as they were only to visit such as Jesus Himself was soon to enter, their work was no doubt speedily accomplished. Their mission was indeed important, though brief, and therefore called for special instructions. They were to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah; and in so doing they were, in the main, to imitate the apostles, and like them they were empowered to work miracles in proof of their authority; but their commission contains no hint that their ministry was to be of long duration, and it was expressly limited to the few places which Jesus purposed to visit on His journey to Jerusalem. Some indeed have seen a mystical significance in the number *seventy*; but they overlook the fact that *the whole number of messengers is quite unknown*; for the seventy were an addition to the force already in the field. If they were associated with the apostles, there were in all, eighty-two, which is not claimed as a sacred number. But as their coadjutors were probably the messengers previously sent forth, it is difficult to perceive in the number any occult allusion to the seventy elders of Israel, to the seventy members of the Sanhedrim, or to any other seventy Jews or Gentiles. As many were sent forth as were needed for the work in hand,—neither more nor less.

It is probable, as they went out two and two, that they frequently returned to report progress. And they all told the same story, declaring with joy not unmingled with vain-glory, that even the demons were subject to them through

the name of Christ. Our Lord's reply is memorable: "I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not because the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

In this moment of victory, our Lord had a foretaste of the joy set before Him. He "rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to Me of my Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father: and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." This acknowledgment of the divine sovereignty in the selection of babes—of little children and those who are *like* little children,—in preference to the wise and prudent of this world, who by reason of pride and self-sufficiency are incapable of discerning spiritual things, is not to be interpreted as implying an arbitrary decree of reprobation in respect to the latter; but rather as setting forth the general principle of the divine administration, that the simple-hearted, the teachable, the trustful,—in a word, the child-like, and they alone, are the chosen subjects of that supernatural illumination by which the divine in the gospel is discerned. The communication of all things from the Father to the Son, and the mutual consciousness in which they are fully known to each other, are a complete proof that the Father and the Son are of the same substance, power and divinity. The work of the third Person of the adorable Trinity is intimated in clauses which set forth the revelation of the Father by the Son to susceptible souls. Having given utterance to His sub-

lime joy, Jesus turned to His disciples and said privately: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see and have not seen them; and to hear the things which ye hear and have not heard them."

Where the following incident occurred is unknown; probably in Perea. A certain lawyer, or scribe, who professed a special knowledge of the law, stood up, not it would seem in a hostile but rather in a self-righteous and self-sufficient spirit, and questioned Jesus, to test His knowledge and skill. "Master," he asked, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered in the usual rabbinical form: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer, reading perhaps from his phylactery, replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus simply said, "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." The lawyer, having proposed a profound and important question, with a view to elicit discussion, was confounded and mortified at thus being forced to answer his own question, in a manner so direct and simple. Anxious to show that his question was really a difficult one, and willing to justify himself, he asked again, "And who is my neighbor?" The scribes and Pharisees had put on the word a narrow and technical interpretation by which the Samaritans and Gentiles were excluded. Our Lord improved the opportunity thus offered to impart larger instruction than the lawyer had sought:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that

way ; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was ; and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him ; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves ? And *the lawyer* said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE."

The parable needs no explanation, and its perennial lesson no enforcement.

CHAPTER II.

PROGRESS OF THE PEREAN MINISTRY.

JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY—HEALS A DUMB MAN—THE PHARISEES BLASPHEME—A WOMAN BLESSES HIM—HE DENOUNCES THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES—HE DECLINES THE OFFICE OF CIVIL ARBITER—PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL—DISCOURSE ON TRUST IN PROVIDENCE, READINESS FOR THE LORD'S COMING, ETC.

LUKE XI. 1-54; XII. 1-59.

WE have reached a period of our Lord's history which abounds in chronological and harmonistic difficulties, many of which are apparently insoluble. The plan of this work forbids any formal discussion of these difficulties; but it is important to remark that they are not such as imply any contradiction between the evangelists. It is quite clear that Luke, on whose guidance we now mainly rely, groups events and discourses without much reference to their order in time, introducing many things in this central part of his gospel, which undoubtedly belong to an earlier or later period of our Lord's life. Some of the incidents related by him, though they have a close resemblance to certain others narrated by the other evangelists, are doubtless to be regarded as separate. And so, too, some of the discourses which might at first strike the reader as identical with similar ones recorded by Matthew and Mark, must be pronounced, on careful examination, to be *repetitions* of the same on quite different occasions. This remark is *perhaps* applicable to the heal-

ing of the dumb man, and the discourse founded upon it, recorded, Luke xi. 14-26, and also to the discourse recorded, verses 29-52 of the same chapter. For a full exposition of such passages, the reader is referred to Alford, Lange, Van Oosterzee, and other learned commentators on the four gospels. The separate treatment of them would be incompatible with the design of this book. Some incidents and sayings peculiar to Luke are, however, of transcendent interest and beauty, and must by no means be omitted.

It is quite certain that Jesus often prayed with His disciples. Some of His prayers are recorded, and others are noted as having been uttered. On one occasion, after He had concluded, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." In reply, Jesus recited the substance of the form which He had long before given in the Sermon on the Mount :* "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." It is probable that the disciple who sought instruction of our Lord was a new convert; otherwise he would have remembered the earlier version of the same prayer; but the request is remarkable, not only as showing the care and fidelity of the Baptist in training his disciples, but as a proof that, hitherto, no forms of prayer had been in use among the followers of Jesus. It would seem highly probable to us that the form given in the Sermon on the Mount would have at once been adopted and used liturgically by the disciples in their daily devotions. This

* Matthew vi. 9-13.

certainly was not the case, or this disciple would already have become familiar with it.

This is not all ; the fact that our Lord, at this time, gives the prayer with important verbal variations, proves that He did not prescribe it as a set form, to be *binding* on His church, either then or in following ages. It is a proof that He intended that the worship of His people should be free and spontaneous, unshackled by laws and regulations touching the outward form. This general principle does not forbid the use of the Lord's prayer, or any other liturgical forms, when prompted by LOVE. That Jesus attached comparatively little importance to the form of prayer, is evident from His discourse on this occasion. "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves ; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him ? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not ; the door is now shut and my children are with me in bed ; I can not rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." This parable has the same general design with that of the unjust judge,* with which it is compared by Trench, who sums up both in language singularly terse and felicitous : "If *selfish man* can be won by prayer and importunity to give, and *unjust man* to do right, much more certainly shall the *bountiful* Lord bestow and the *righteous* Lord do justice."† But let it not, for a moment, be supposed that our Lord intends to intimate that there is any real reluctance in the heart of God to bestow blessings on His needy creatures. On the contrary He goes on, in this discourse, as in the Sermon on

* Luke xviii. 2-8.

† Parables, page 291.

the Mount,* to assure His disciples of God's paternal readiness to supply their wants, in answer to their prayers, with all good things. The kind of reluctance to be overcome by importunate prayer, is illustrated in our Lord's treatment of the Syro-Phenician woman.†

The presence and miracles of our Lord in Perea created a popular excitement not less intense than that which marked the history of His ministry in Galilee. He encountered hostility from the ruling class scarcely less bitter than that which had compelled Him to leave Capernaum. Here, as well as there, were some who accused Him of casting out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. In reply to this our Lord follows a line of argument and denunciation, nearly identical with that on the former occasion; and He delivers at the same time a discourse to the people, which was, in substance, a partial anticipation of that most terrible discourse which He addressed to His enemies just before His final departure from the temple. Having already noticed the reasonings by which He refuted the charge of the blaspheming Pharisees, we postpone our remarks on the popular address to a future chapter.‡

It was in some connection with these discourses of Jesus, that a woman in the assembly exclaimed, in a loud voice, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!" It is difficult to decide with what degree of intelligence this was spoken. It may have been, as Alford conjectures, the language of "common-place and unintelligent wonder at the sayings and doings of Jesus;" but it may also have been prompted by genuine, adoring faith, apprehending intuitively the mystery of the incarnation. The woman, for aught that appears, may have long been a disciple; and our Lord's reply, though

* Matt. vii. 7-11. † See Part VII., Chap. III. ‡ See Part IX., Chap. VIII.

slightly admonitory, by no means forbids the supposition: “Yea, rather,” (*or yes, indeed, but*) “blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” Jesus does not deny that His mother was singularly blessed in having borne and nurtured Him; He rather asserts it; but He declares that faith and obedience secure a still higher blessedness,—an answer which cuts away the very roots of that Mariolatry which overshadows so large a portion of the Christian world, but one also which sanctions a legitimate reverence for the entirely human but pure and gracious mother of the incarnate Word. Even her chief blessedness lay in the fact that she heard and kept the word of God; and that is a blessedness of which all true believers are partakers. Jesus had not long before declared that whosoever obeyed the will of God, was His brother and sister and mother.* .

About this time, while our Lord was speaking to His disciples against the fear of man and distrust of Providence,† exhorting them to deny themselves and confess Him openly, while they entrusted their lives to Him who forgets not even the sparrows, and numbers the hairs on the heads of His people, a certain man who, perhaps, had been oppressed and defrauded by his brother, regarding Jesus as a temporal Messiah, or at least, as a great Prophet, said to Him: “Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus, almost in the very words of the Israelite to Moses,‡ answered: “Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?” The words are of great importance, as setting forth the nature and extent of Christ’s office as King and Judge. While He insisted everywhere and at all times that He was a real king, He claimed, *in this world*, only the authority of a legislator, adjourning to a future age, a future world, the

* Matthew xii. 50.

† Luke xii.

‡ Exodus ii. 14.

actual distribution of rewards and punishments. In this respect His office appears in strong contrast with that of Moses, whose legislation was, in an important sense, *for time*, and whose administration extended to all the details of secular affairs. It was not, therefore, by accident that Jesus quoted, in substance, the words of the rebellious Hebrew in Egypt.* It is scarcely necessary to suggest that this view of Christ's dominion is fatal to the temporal power and pretensions which have, for so many ages, been maintained by the self-styled vicar of Christ on earth.

Jesus, always watchful for opportunities for impressing practical lessons on the minds of His hearers, takes occasion from this ill-timed request, which may have been prompted by avarice, to warn His disciples against a greedy, idolatrous love of earthly riches: "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." He then added the following parable: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The wonderfully beautiful discourse which Luke records in connection with this parable, is in part a repetition of certain passages in the Sermon on the Mount.† These

* See the striking remarks on Christ's Kingship, in *Ecce Homo*.

† Compare Matthew vi. 25-34, with Luke xii. 22-34.

have been noticed in a former chapter.* Some of the additional matter, however, may well arrest and fix our attention. What inimitable tenderness in the words, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." This is the language of the Good Shepherd, who carries His sheep in His bosom, and assures them of continued guidance and protection, till they are all safely folded in heaven. The kingdom of God, which is now theirs in tribulation and patience, shall be theirs in its triumphant glory and blessedness. To secure that kingdom, no earthly sacrifice ought to be accounted great or painful. No; let the world, with its pomps and pleasures, be gladly forsaken for an inheritance in the skies! "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." Jesus goes on to urge the importance of vigilant preparation and constant readiness for the approaching kingdom: "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and be yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth to serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

* See Part V., Chapter X.

Continuing in the same strain, our Lord solemnly warns His disciples against taking any encouragement from what might appear the delay of His coming, to abate their zeal, relax their fidelity, or tyrannize over their fellow-servants—a warning which ought especially to be heeded in the present season of delay, when scoffers are saying, with more than the exulting malice of their ancient prototypes, “Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”* “I am come,” says the Lord, “to send fire on the earth; and what will I? would that it were already kindled?”† The fire which Jesus came to send *into the earth*—that is to say, into the human world—is the fire spoken of by John the Baptist: “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” He came down from heaven to kindle in human hearts and in human society, by the special energy of the Holy Ghost, a blessed and purifying conflagration of holy love; and He longed, with divine ardor, to see that conflagration spreading through the world. But ere this great end of His mission could be realized, He must needs suffer: “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” Amazing words, expressive of a spirit of self-sacrifice all divine! Looking forward to the time, when He would be swallowed up and overwhelmed by the billows of His death and passion, He expresses a holy eagerness and impatience for the consummation of His sacrifice! Lamb of God, have mercy on *us*, who so often shrink from petty trials in the prosecution of our work.

Jesus forewarns His disciples, that the first effect of the heavenly fire which He would send into the earth,

* II. Peter iii. 4.

† It seems to be settled that this is the correct rendering of Luke xii. 49. See Alford *in loco*.

would be to stir up the natural enmity of the human heart to the divine and holy, and thus to occasion contention among men: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division; for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." It is not, of course, implied in these startling words that our Lord came into the world to create division; His mission, as proclaimed by the herald-angels, was one of peace on earth; and the tendency of His religion is to promote mutual good-will and harmony among men; but during the period of its conflict with the selfishness and enmity of human nature, there must necessarily be division and strife. The time will come, however, when the spirit of Christ will have gained the mastery over the insurgent and malevolent passions of the human heart, and then "*peace* will lie like a shaft of light across the land and like a lane of beams athwart the sea." "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."*

* Isaiah xi. 6-9.

CHAPTER III.

FURTHER PROGRESS OF THE PEREAN MINISTRY.

JESUS PROSECUTES HIS MINISTRY IN PEREA—INFORMED OF PILATE'S SLAUGHTER OF THE GALILEANS—HIS APPLICATION OF THE FACT—PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG-TREE—HEALS THE INFIRM WOMAN—THE RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE CONDEMNS THE ACT—IS REBUKED BY JESUS—REPLIES TO THE QUERY AS TO THE NUMBER OF THE SAVED—IS WARNED OF HEROD'S HOSTILITY—HIS REPLY.

MATTHEW XIX. 1, 2. MARK X. 1. LUKE XIII. 10-35.

THE particular stage in His progress through Perea which our Lord had now reached, and the immediate neighborhood in which He was now preaching, we have no means of determining. The materials afforded by the sacred narrative for forming a satisfactory judgment on these,—as indeed on all other facts of the kind connected with the Perea ministry,—are exceedingly scanty. We gather, however, from the narrative, that our Lord was actively employed in prosecuting His missionary labors among the Perea. It is a noticeable fact, also, that in these labors, He appears to be less occupied with working miracles than formerly. His time seems to have been chiefly taken up in teaching, and in solving the difficulties of those who came to Him with questions.

On one occasion there came certain persons to Him with the news that in a recent outbreak at one of the feasts, Pilate had slaughtered a number of Galileans in the outer court of the temple. It was added as a fact of

great significance, that their blood had even been mingled with the sacrifices. Aside from the narrative here given by Luke, we know nothing of the fact related. It is not elsewhere mentioned in history. We have, however, no reason to doubt its authenticity. The statement is made in the manner of one who was well acquainted with the fact, and who regarded it as generally known at the time. It is a matter of history also, that such incidents were of frequent occurrence among the Jews of this period. The occasion which led to the recital would seem to be this:—The Jewish mind could not get rid of the idea that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince who should deliver them from Roman domination. This sacrilegious slaughter of the Galileans in the temple, by Pilate, was calculated to shock both Jewish prejudice and patriotism. The question, then, would naturally arise, “Will not Jesus, if He be really the Christ, be roused by such an act of cruelty and profanation, to assert His supremacy and revenge these wrongs? Let us at least tell Him the facts, and see what He says about it.”

With characteristic tact, our Lord avoids any committal of Himself on civil questions, and turns the incident to moral account. As far back as the days of Job, the oriental mind had carried its ideas of guilt and retribution so far as to hold that the measure of temporal misfortune must be the measure of concealed sin. Seizing upon this fact, our Lord not only changes the current of their thoughts, but brings them to a most unexpected issue. “That was a grievous calamity, and you regard such events as retributive. But is it to be supposed ‘that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered these things?’ Or take the case of the ‘eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them,’ and which would seem to be more directly attributable to Divine Providence; is it to be taken for

granted that 'they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem,' because this disaster overtook them? 'I tell you. Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Retribution is not exactly meted out to man in this life. Hence, you can not, from a man's fortunes or misfortunes, determine his relative merit or demerit. No such doom as that of the Galileans has overtaken you; but it neither follows that you have less need of repentance, nor that you are less liable to calamity."

Our Lord proceeds to set before His hearers more distinctly the two important truths: that men are often quite as blameworthy for leaving undone what is enjoined, as for doing what is forbidden; and that the continuance of sparing mercy is not at all due to their worthiness, but wholly to the long-suffering patience of God. These, we take it, are the principal lessons taught in the parable of the barren fig-tree; which, however, had also a special reference to God's dealings with the Jewish nations at this time: "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Not long after the preceding incidents, possibly on the succeeding Sabbath, Jesus wrought a miracle which renewed the old dispute as to His divine authority over times and seasons. As He was teaching in the synagogue, He observed among the people present "a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." Immediately calling her to Him He said to her, "Woman,

thou art loosed from thine infirmity," and laying His hands upon her, healed her, so that "she was made straight and glorified God." A blessed change for the sufferer! All this long, weary bondage to deformity and helplessness, to commiseration and ridicule, was over. How must every observer have rejoiced in his heart, as he saw her lift her bent frame to the upright form and fair proportions of womanhood!

But no! In one heart a malign spirit held sway. The ruler of the synagogue, with true Pharisaic bigotry, took offense, because this blessed work of relief and restoration had been wrought on the Sabbath day. Jesus had not neglected justice, judgment and mercy; but He had failed to pay tithes in Pharisaical mint, anise and cumin; He had transgressed the tradition of the elders. So the ruler of the synagogue, indignant yet half conscious of his meanness, indirectly reproved our Lord by his rebuke to the woman who had been healed. "There are six days," said he, "in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." All our Lord's divine sense of justice and mercy was roused within Him. His indignation flashed upon the culprit in scathing words: "*Thou hypocrite*; doth not each of you on the Sabbath day loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

The full force of this rebuke can only be seen by noting the striking contrasts embraced in the illustration: the objects of concern are, on the one hand, a dumb beast; on the other, a daughter of Abraham; the beast was simply tied to his stall where he was fed; the woman was bound down by a painful infirmity; the former had been confined but a few hours; the bondage of the latter had been of

eighteen years' duration; the occasion of loosing the beast on the Sabbath was merely that he might be watered; that of the woman, that she might be restored to a life of health and comfort.* A contrast so well-chosen roused the sympathies of the hearers; our Lord's adversaries were confounded, and the people rejoiced.

As our Lord continued His journey toward Jerusalem, preaching in the cities and villages that lay along His route, in a certain place, one of His hearers put the question to Him, "Lord are there few that be saved?" The question, as it was put, had really no practical importance,—so without answering it directly, Jesus proceeded to set forth, and impress upon the mind of the questioner certain collateral truths of the first moment. His language has much this force: "Whether there be few or many saved, it concerns you little to know. But it does concern you to know that your own salvation requires faithful and strenuous effort. It does concern you to know that many are fearfully self-deceived as to their hopes of salvation; and do you beware that you are not among them. It does concern you to know that there is a limit to the divine patience; that there is a point where the sinner's procrastination closes the door of hope against him. It does concern you to know that those most favored with the means of grace, are most in danger of coming short of the kingdom of God through presumption and delay. Keep this in mind, and see to it that, dismissing all idle questions, you 'strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'"

On the same day, a curious incident occurred: certain of His sworn enemies the Pharisees, with great seeming friendliness came to Him and said: "Get thee out and

* See Alford, *in loco*.

depart hence; for Herod will kill thee." What their object was, is not quite clear. Some suppose that Herod, uneasy at the popular excitement which attended our Lord's progress, sent these Pharisees with this report to Jesus in order to hasten His departure from that region. A better explanation makes the whole a device of the Pharisees themselves, who sought in this way to hurry Him forward to Jerusalem, where their plans for His destruction were now maturing. Our Lord's message seemingly addressed to Herod, is not necessarily at variance with this view. He sees clearly that the Pharisees are at the bottom of the whole scheme, yet prudently guards against betraying His conviction of the fact. Hence, humoring their representation of the matter, he says: "Go tell that fox, that the violent designs of my enemies are as yet idle. My divine mission is not ended. I must yet cast out devils and do cures, and not till after this work is done will the time come for Me to be made perfect through suffering. Besides this, 'It can not be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.' That is the place of peril; I am safe enough till I get there; then I am prepared to meet violence and death."

Our Lord's reference to this probably proverbial saying, then naturally led Him in view of the accumulated guilt and approaching doom of Jerusalem, to break out into that passionate exclamation, at once so reproachful and so tender; so sternly yet sadly prophetic: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate. And verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FEAST OF DEDICATION.

JESUS GOES UP TO JERUSALEM—VISITS MARTHA AND MARY—INCIDENTS AND CONVERSATION—JESUS AT THE FEAST—DISPUTE WITH THE JEWS—THEY ATTEMPT VIOLENCE—HE RETIRES TO BETHABARA AND THERE ABIDES.

JOHN x. 22-42. LUKE x. 38-4

THE Feast of Dedication was instituted by the Maccabees (B. C. 164) in commemoration of the deliverance of the nation from the Syrians, and of the cleansing and re-consecration of the temple after its long sacrilegious defilement. The festival was as much one of patriotism as of religion, and it might be celebrated throughout the land as well as at Jerusalem. Our Lord was under no legal obligation to go up to the Holy City, and there must have been some special reason for the journey. What this was we can only infer from the general situation. We have seen that when He left Galilee, He sent special messengers to announce not only His coming but His character as the Messiah. This period of His ministry is marked, therefore, by the widest publicity rather than by the reserve and concealment which were maintained during His later ministry in Galilee. It is reasonably conjectured, therefore, that one end of His present journey was to show Himself more openly at Jerusalem, as the Messiah, than He had hitherto done, and to secure a general proclamation of His divine mission. Perhaps also He longed for the society of certain friends whom He tenderly loved and whose residence was near Jerusalem.

Our history now first introduces us to a family at Bethany, associated with the name of Jesus and with the later weeks of His life in a way peculiarly sacred and tender. This family included two sisters, Martha and Mary, and a younger brother, Lazarus. Martha may, for aught that appears, have had a husband living, or a father; but she was, in any case, the real head of the household. She was probably in affluent circumstances, and could afford to indulge a hospitable disposition. She belonged to a class of women, more numerous in modern times and occidental lands than among the Jews in the time of Christ,—women of great energy, skill, and despatch in the management of household affairs. We picture her to ourselves as the most notable housewife in Bethany. Her doors were always open to her friends, who never lacked kind attention and liberal entertainment. She was evidently capable of strong attachments and deep religious faith; but her bustling, thrifty course of life did not indicate what we should call predominant spirituality. She was not sordid and avaricious; but her devotion to secular duties may have appeared to many so intense as to mark her character as *worldly*. Her turn of mind was practical and matter-of-fact, rather than meditative and devotional; she was largely endowed with what American women of a former generation called *faculty*; her religious views were somewhat clouded, and her spiritual nature a little dulled by her incessant occupation with outward things. After all abatements and qualifications, however, we feel for Martha an unfeigned admiration. She loved the Saviour, in her way, as truly as her sister, who was of a quite different character and temperament. Mary was, we conjecture, considerably younger than Martha, who may even have filled the place of a mother to her. Mary felt little interest in the world around her; she lived in the spiritual; she was

given to religious contemplation; her whole soul was absorbed in the divine and eternal. Though no word of hers has come down to us, though she appears in the history as even helplessly silent, there is abundant evidence that no human being was in closer sympathy with Jesus, or better understood the mystery of His person, the divine wisdom of His teachings, and the necessity of His cross and passion, than this mute, deep-hearted woman. Of Lazarus little is recorded except that Jesus loved him, and wrought His most resplendent miracle to call him back from the grave. He probably resembled in character his sister Mary.

How and when Jesus had become acquainted with this lovely family, we know not. We infer from their intimate relations that the connection had been of long standing. It is possible that they had formerly resided in Galilee, though the evangelists give no hint of such a fact. It is certain, however, that the house of Martha was, more than any other, our Lord's earthly home, whenever He went up to Jerusalem. We are not surprised, therefore, that, when He went up from Perea to attend the Feast of Dedication, He became her guest. When He entered their dwelling the difference in character between the sisters became at once apparent. Both were doubtless full of joy, but of a joy which expressed itself in ways singularly characteristic of each. Scarcely had Jesus seated Himself in the guest-room, when Martha, "on hospitable thoughts intent," disappeared; but Mary took her usual place at the feet of her Master, to listen to His words. She forgot the world, her sister, household duties, and herself, while that divine voice was sounding in her ears. She sat, we fancy, as one entranced, hanging on the lips, drinking in the words of Him who spake as never man spake. With the clear glance of spiritual intuition she penetrated metaphor and parable, maxim

and precept, and apprehended the living substance of divine truth in them all. She was unconscious of time. The minutes, perhaps the hours, passed away unnoted.

Meanwhile Martha is engaged,—doubtless, in another apartment,—in preparing the meal for her beloved and honored Guest. This is *her* way of demonstrating her affection and reverence. In the largeness of her hospitality, she has undertaken too much for her unaided strength. She is burdened with manifold cares. Possibly her servants are stupid and maladroit. She is anxious and “cumbered about much serving.” At length her trial becomes intolerable. She thinks of Mary sitting in blissful peace at Jesus’ feet, and a feeling of indignation, almost of envy, rises in her heart. Always prompt and decided in her ways, and now out of temper, she hastily comes to Jesus, not, we conjecture, without a flushed face and flashing eyes, and says to Him, almost in a tone of reproach, “Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.” As if she had said: “It is in vain for me to ask her assistance; she cares not for my toil and fatigue; but if Thou wilt command her, she will lend me a helping hand.”

Poor Mary! thus harshly recalled from her heavenly abstraction, what could she say? how could she appease the anger of her sister, whom she *had* left to serve alone? Probably her first feeling was one of shame, perhaps of guilt. May she not have thought within herself: “How selfish of me to sit here enjoying the discourse of the Master, while my noble sister is wearing out her strength to serve Him!” Whatever she thought, she said not a word, glancing perhaps meanwhile, in helpless distress, from her sister to Jesus. He did for Mary what He is always ready to do for His people, when they are unjustly accused by man or devil,—*He answered for her*: “Mar-

tha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." Doubtless the words are not only admonitory, but intended to convey a tender reproof; the very repetition of the name implies so much. Martha is rebuked for her inward impatience, as well as for the external turmoil caused by her wish to prepare "*many things*" for her guests, when a simpler entertainment would have been sufficient. Having, however, thus mentioned the many things which were needless, Jesus proceeds to speak of the one spiritual portion—the bread of heaven—the living word—which was absolutely essential to the soul's life. That "good portion"—the part *intrinsically* good which could not be taken away—Mary had chosen, and she was supremely blessed in her choice. We could wish that the history had gone on to tell us how Martha bore the reproof and Mary the commendation. We venture the conjecture that Martha—noble woman that she was—at once owned her fault, grew calm and humble, and embraced her sister whom she had rashly blamed; and *that Mary rose from her place at the Saviour's feet and took part in serving the guests*. This conjecture is founded not on any words of the evangelist; but on a certain page which we have more than once read in the book of human nature.

Jesus is now once more in Jerusalem, walking, in the bleak winter weather, under the shelter of Solomon's Porch. In this place of public resort, the Jews gather around Him. Many of them, at least, had seen and heard Him some two months before, at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they well remembered the parable of the shepherd and the sheep, with which He concluded His discourses at that time. It was with no friendly purpose that they now approached Him: "How long," said they, "dost

Thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." "Thy disciples proclaim Thee as the Messiah; many of Thy words and acts seem to imply that Thou regardest Thyself as the Son of David and the King of Israel: yet Thou dost not say, in so many words, that Thou art He: and thus we are left in a state of painful suspense. Put an end to our perplexity by declaring whether Thou art the Christ or not." Thus they laid a snare for Him; they sought to draw from Him a decisive statement, on which to ground a formal accusation before the Sanhedrim. Jesus in effect answers their question; but in such a way as to thwart their malice: "I told you and ye believed not; the works which I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." He had on various occasions declared His divine mission and Sonship, not only by words which none but wrong-minded hearers could have failed to understand, but also by works so evidently divine that they fully demonstrated His relation to God as His only begotten Son. They had not, however, believed, and the cause of their unbelief was now plainly declared: "Ye believe not because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." Thus the unbelief of the Jews is traced to their spiritual state; they were not His sheep, and *therefore* did not hear His voice. All the true members of His flock had been given Him by the Father in an eternal covenant; and their faith, love, obedience and eternal salvation, were secured by His own love and protection, and by the Father's power.

The meaning of the words, "I and My Father are one,"

has been the subject of long and bitter controversy in these later ages; but those who then heard them had no doubt respecting it. They understood Jesus to assert that He, standing there in the form of a man, was one in essence with the eternal God; for no sooner had the words fallen on their ears than they took up stones to stone Him. Now mark the conversation which follows: "Many good works," says the Lord, "have I showed you from My Father; for which of these works do ye stone Me? The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." How does Jesus reply to this charge of blasphemy? By telling them that they had utterly misunderstood His words? By assuring them that He was truly but a man, and only a son of God, one son among many? Surely, had they fallen into a mistake so gross, a mistake so easily corrected, He was bound then and there to set them right. Instead of this, He reasserts in other words His divine Sonship, endeavoring to lead them up from a lower conception to a higher, by a striking argument from the Scriptures: "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If He called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, THAT THE FATHER IS IN ME, AND I IN HIM." Hearing this, they again attempted to apprehend Him, but He escaped from them, perhaps by miracle, and retired to Bethabara, beyond Jordan.

CHAPTER V.

JESUS DINES WITH THE PHARISEE.

JESUS DINES WITH THE CHIEF PHARISEE—HEALS THE DROPSICAL MAN—
REBUKES THE GUESTS FOR SEEKING THE CHIEF SEATS—REPROVES
THE OSTENTATIOUS PRIDE OF THE HOST—UTTERS THE PARABLE OF
THE GREAT SUPPER—INSISTS ON ENTIRE DEVOTION IN HIS DISCIPLES.

LUKE XIV. 1-35.

It appears probable that our Lord spent a considerable portion of the four months intervening between the Feast of Dedication and the Passover in the neighborhood of Bethabara. During this sojourn, He was on one occasion invited to dine on the Sabbath day with one of the chief Pharisees, who was probably so styled not merely from his high social standing, but also because of his official position either in the synagogue or the Sanhedrim. The occurrence of this feast on the Sabbath may strike some as singular. But it was customary for the Jews thus to entertain their friends on the Sabbath. Although they did not allow the cooking of food on that day, their tables were generally better spread then than at any other time. The motive which led the Pharisee to offer this entertainment to our Lord, may have been a desire to show Him respect as a prophet; but more probably it was an act of ostentatious hospitality. The friends of the Pharisee, of whom many appear to have been invited, made the feast an occasion for maliciously watching the words and actions of Jesus.

At this repast, our Lord observed standing immediately before Him a man afflicted with dropsy. This man would appear to have been seeking Jesus, in faith, desiring to be healed, and to have been admitted to the guest-chamber by the enemies of Jesus, for the purpose of drawing Him out. Our Lord, however, understood their object, and promptly anticipated their proposed attack. Turning to the lawyers and the Pharisees, He said to them: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" Perceiving that He had divined their intentions, and fearful of being caught in their answer, they prudently "held their peace." Having thus silenced them beforehand, Jesus took the dropsical man and healed him, and sent him away. He then proceeded to justify the act by summarily appealing to their own ideas of humanity and mercy in lesser things; "Which of you," says He, "shall have an ox or an ass,"—a mere brute animal, "fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" The argument was conclusive; they could not answer it; they did not attempt it.

Having thus turned their position and forestalled the attack they had meditated, He carries the war into their own camp. Marking the petty ambition with which those who were bidden had struggled to secure the chief places, He proceeds to set forth not only the littleness but the folly of such ambition. "When you are bidden to a feast," says He, "you at once arrogate to yourselves the highest seats. You thus expose yourselves to the extreme mortification of being compelled to take a lower place, in order to make room for some more distinguished guest of whose presence you were not aware. How much easier to take the lower place first. If you are really worthy of a better place, the fact will be noticed, and you will be requested to go up higher; you will thus be doubly esteemed and honored; 'for whosoever exalteth

himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.’”

And now comes the turn of the host himself. His pride and ostentation also deserve rebuke. “When thou makest a dinner or a supper,” says Jesus,—glancing perhaps at the guests whose appearance was indicative of affluence,—“call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they can not recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” There spoke the love of Jesus, for the miserable of our race. And yet these words, so full of the truest dignity and humanity, met with no adequate response. One of those present, indeed, exclaimed with seeming devoutness,—“Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God;” it was only seeming devoutness; for, as says Van Oosterzee, “We find therein a somewhat unlucky attempt by an edifying turn to make an end of a discourse which contained nothing flattering to the host, and might perhaps soon pass over to yet sharper rebuke of the guests.”*

Our Lord, by no means diverted by this artifice from His purpose, retorts upon the speaker in the following parable: “A certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife; and

* See his “Commentary on Luke,” *in loco*.

therefore I can not come. So that servant came and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

The force of the parable, as thus applied by our Lord, will be seen in the fact that it was tantamount to saying, "What does your praise of them who sit at the table in the kingdom of God amount to, when you are among those who, on the most frivolous pretenses, refuse to accept the invitation thereto? And what will all your seeming devoutness and enthusiasm in uttering their praises advantage you, when, for your refusal to accept the invitation, you yourself are doomed to be excluded from the feast, while those who are the objects of your contempt will be brought in and made to partake of its fulness."

Passing from these incidents, the sacred narrative presents Jesus to us as continuing His journey, attended by an immense concourse of people. The spectacle resembles those remarkable manifestations of the popular interest so common during His ministry in Galilee. The truth was, the common people could not resist the influence of His wondrous teachings and His mighty works. We can hardly doubt that, but for the persistent malice of their leaders, they would have continued to receive Him gladly. Fearful is the responsibility of those who, having power to lead the multitude, use it only to stir up their evil passions, and array them, in opposition to their better instincts, against the truth.

Conscious of the increasing perils of true discipleship, which must result from the growing hostility of His enemies, our Lord, on one occasion, turned to the multitude, and endeavored to impress upon them the importance of calm and resolute self-denial on the part of those who would embrace His cause. "Whoever," says He, "would be My disciple must, like him who would build a tower, or grapple with a powerful foe, count the cost beforehand, and gird himself to the work with invincible courage and resolution. He must leave no room for retreat. He must be prepared to make every sacrifice for the good of the cause. He must be ready to lay everything on the altar of his devotion; personal comfort, domestic attachments, and, next dearest to those, his life. He who hath not such love for Me, and such devotion to My cause, is weak and worthless. He is like salt that hath lost its savor. What influence can he exert; what success can he attain; with what grace even can he himself be seasoned for his own salvation?"

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEART OF GOD.

MAN'S MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE DIVINE NATURE—JESUS CAME TO REVEAL THE FATHER'S HEART TOWARDS THE LOST—THE EFFECT OF THIS REVELATION ON DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN—ESPECIALLY ON PUBLICANS AND SINNERS—PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP—PARABLE OF THE LOST PIECE OF MONEY—PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

LUKE XV.

NOTHING was so little known, till Christ came in the flesh, as the heart of God. He had not left Himself without witness; the heavens declared His glory, and the firmament His handiwork; man's conscience and religious nature testified to His justice; the law and the prophets revealed His holiness and goodness; but men knew not how He stood affected towards them as sinners. They had no conception of His love towards the unworthy and the lost; but, on the contrary, they thought of Him only as an angry Judge,—an infinite Adversary who lay in wait to take them in their evil deeds, and launch at their guilty heads the bolts of His consuming wrath. In the time of Christ those who thought they knew Jehovah best, knew Him least. The self-righteous Pharisees thought that God was an infinite Pharisee, who maintained His dignity by treating with coldness all persons of doubtful character. That He was A FATHER whose heart went forth in tender longing after His rebellious children, never entered their minds. They could not

conceive of a righteousness which did not mainly lie in a haughty abhorrence of all who were guilty of disreputable sins. The "sinners" of that time were but too ready to accept this Pharisaic view of the Divine Nature; and they therefore lived in a state of sullen despair, expecting no favor from men, hoping for no mercy from God. This indeed is, in all ages, the sad fruit of a vicious life.

Now Jesus came to dispel all the mists with which guilty and superstitious fear had veiled the face of the Father from the eyes of His wandering children. He came to reveal the Father's HEART. The being, power, wisdom, and holiness of God had been revealed; but not His unutterable tenderness. Jesus was the first to reveal the heart of God; He was Himself that revelation. In Him the sterner attributes that had been manifest, were hidden; and the heart of the Father that had been hidden, was made manifest.* The effect of this revelation on those who heard His words and witnessed His manner of life was very remarkable. The Pharisees could only believe in a God who was like one of them, and they therefore could not discern the divine in Jesus of Nazareth; but publicans and sinners when they saw Him were struck with glad surprise; hope dawned upon their despairing minds; they were drawn to the Lord by the magnetism of His pitying love; they felt that He was a Teacher, a Master, a Saviour *for them*; they heard Him with wonder and joy, and many of them became His followers to the end. On one occasion, many of this description gathered around Him, less eager to witness His miracles than to hear His words. The scribes and Pharisees, seeing this concourse of disreputable persons, were scandalized; "this man," they said, "receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

* See Pulsford's "Quiet Hours," "Jesus revealing the heart of God."

Jesus, to rebuke His self-righteous censors, and to encourage His penitents, uttered that wondrous series of parables which may well be entitled, *the Heart of God*. We give them here in full, one idea in three different forms;—the eagerness with which we seek to regain a lost treasure or a lost child, used as a faint symbol of the yearning of our Heavenly Father over souls rescued from perdition :

“What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.”

“What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

This intimates that God values a lost soul, bearing His image and superscription, more than the most careful housewife prizes a lost coin, stamped with the likeness of some earthly prince. The diligent search of the latter for the lost piece of silver is but a feeble type of God's earnest seeking for lost souls.

“A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said unto his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son

gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;—but the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out and entreated him. And he, answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my

friends; but as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; and was lost and is found."

In this wonderful parable, paternal love, outliving filial ingratitude and treason the most vile, and going forth to meet its lost, not with reproaches, scarcely with forgiveness, but with kisses and benedictions, is presented as the image of the yearning tenderness of God towards His rebellious children. He longs for their return; He sees them afar off, when their hearts begin to turn towards Him; He runs by His Spirit and His church to meet them; He gives them *the kiss of peace*, the immediate token of reconciliation; He covers their naked souls with *the best robe*, even with "that linen clean and white which is the righteousness of saints;" He gives them the ring of gold with the family seal upon it; that is to say, "the power to become the sons of God"—the privilege and witness of adoption; He puts shoes upon their feet, that they may run with swiftness the race that is set before them; He commands the fatted calf to be killed that their famished souls may be fed, and summons all the members of the celestial household to make merry, because the dead is alive and the lost is found.

The case of the improvident son very naturally suggested other examples of folly and mismanagement. Hence, our Lord follows the parable of the prodigal son with that of the unjust steward. The two cases are much alike: the son had foolishly squandered his own substance; the steward had, through either unfaithfulness or actual dishonesty, wasted his lord's property. They are, however, in one point in striking contrast: the prodigal, when he sees the ruin he has wrought, makes

no effort to conceal or mend the matter ; sincere, frank penitent, courageous, he makes confession at once, and humbly awaits the result. The steward, on the contrary waits till he is *actually taxed* with his misconduct, and then, with cunning selfishness proceeds, not so much to mend one mischief by another, as to crown misconduct by a deliberate fraud. The following is our Lord's statement of the case :

“There was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee ? give an account of thy stewardship ; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do ? for my lord taketh away from me my stewardship : I can not dig ; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord ? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou ? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely ; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.”

We must guard against involving Jesus Himself in this commendation. The wisdom of the unjust steward was mere worldly sagacity and shrewdness. True to his selfish instincts, he had the wit to wring from the vocation he was about to lose, the means of providing for the future. His was a clear eye and single aim, which *his* lord looked at in the light of worldly policy, and commended

as such. Our Lord called the attention of His disciples, not to the morals of the unjust steward but to his consistent foresight and singleness of purpose; urging them to elevate the same wisdom into rectitude that he had debased into fraud, and so to deal with the treasures of this world as to wring from them not only present comfort but permanent riches, a reception into "everlasting habitations." He showed the strict relation in God's service between fidelity in the lesser field and in the greater, and asked pointedly: "If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"—adding, as a caution against half-service: "No servant can serve two masters; ye can not serve God and mammon."

The general drift of these parables was so unmistakable, that the Pharisees were unable to conceal their irritation. They, however, ventured upon nothing further than ridicule: "they derided Him." Our Lord replied to them with great plainness, giving them to understand that with all their seeming sanctity they were mere hypocrites, and as such, an abomination in the sight of God. He, then, with the evident design of rebuking their covetousness, luxury and unbelief, uttered the parable of the rich man and Lazarus:

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have

mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And, besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed ; so that they who would pass from hence to you can not ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house ; for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham ; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Since no further mention is made of the Pharisees, the presumption is, that as the terrible significance of the parable flashed upon them,—as they saw depicted in it not only their invincible and malignant unbelief, but their coming doom,—they were filled with rage, and withdrew to plot revenge in secret.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

BETHANY—LAZARUS AND HIS ILLNESS—HIS SISTERS SEND TO JESUS—HE ARRIVES AT BETHANY AND IS MET BY MARTHA—MARTHA'S FAITH—SHE CALLS MARY—JESUS WEPT—HE RAISES LAZARUS—THE MIRACLE REPORTED TO THE PHARISEES—ALARM OF THE SANHEDRIM—PROPHETIC UTTERANCE OF CAIAPHAS—SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PREDICTION—JESUS RETIRES TO EPHRAIM—INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN XI. 1-54.

THE scene of this narrative is laid in Bethany, about two miles east from Jerusalem, on the road to Jericho, a place yet in existence, and often visited by travelers. They pass out of the city, at the Damascus gate, on the north-east, cross over the brook Kedron, ascend the Mount of Olives obliquely, and winding round the summit to the south and then again to the east, they find the village lying in a shallow valley on the eastern slope of the mountain. It is now decayed and ruinous, but in the time of Christ it was doubtless populous and flourishing. Here dwelt the hospitable sisters, Martha and Mary, with their brother Lazarus, probably the Benjamin of the family. The place of these three in the hearts of Christendom is assured by the brief statement: "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."*

While our Lord was prosecuting His ministry in Perea there was deep trouble in this beloved family. Lazarus

* John xi. 5.

was taken suddenly and dangerously ill, probably with a malignant fever such as prevail in that climate. The disease was alarming, and the sisters were overwhelmed with dismay. Lazarus must have been singularly pure, affectionate and devout, one who was attached by holy sympathy to the noblest natures, and who attracted them in return. No wonder that Martha and Mary were in deep affliction. Yet there was one hope. Jesus, their adored Lord, their honored and faithful Friend, could heal their brother if He were but present. Nay, He could even heal him at a distance. So they dispatched a messenger to Bethabara,—which was distant only an easy day's journey,—with the simple message: "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick." This they knew would be enough. They did not request the Lord to come to Bethany; they did not even ask Him to heal their brother; they merely apprised Him of their affliction, leaving all the rest to His well-tried love and wisdom.

Jesus received the message, and sent back this answer to the afflicted family: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." These words, though true in a sense known to Jesus Himself, were calculated to try the faith of the sisters; for it is probable that when the messenger returned to Bethany, Lazarus was already dead. What must they *then* have thought of the assurance that the sickness was not unto death? Yet, in the eyes of Him who saw the end from the beginning the sickness was not unto death, as they too, should acknowledge, when they should find that death was not its last issue, but only a transition to a restored and higher life;—a *higher* life, for when Christ declares that sickness to be "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby," He certainly includes in this glory of God the perfecting for Lazarus of his own spiritual being, as we can not doubt

that it *was* perfected through these wondrous events. This death was his passage into life, the decisive crisis of his spiritual development, and also a signal moment in the revelation of the glory of Christ unto the world. The Son of God was first glorified in Lazarus, and then through him to mankind.*

For long, sad hours those affectionate sisters watch over their dying brother. Rapidly does his life ebb away, and ere their messenger returns the end has come. Tenderly they close his eyes, feeling that the light of home is forever quenched. The sound of wailing is heard in that house, late cheerful and happy. The beloved remains are washed, and wrapped around with linen and spices, and ere the setting of the sun, they are borne, according to the Jewish custom, to the family sepulchre, followed by the two heart-broken mourners, who can hardly articulate the customary "*Alas! alas! my brother!*" The stone is laid upon the opening of the vault; and they return to their home, now a home no longer. There, surrounded by some sympathizing and some formal friends, they sit and ponder their loss. The thought uppermost in their minds finds utterance in words broken by sobs: "*Oh that Jesus had been here! then our brother would not have died! alas, why was not the Master with us at such a time as this!*"

Leaving them in their sacred grief, let us now return to Bethabara. Jesus was not ignorant that he whom He loved was dead, but for two days after the messenger departed He continued in the same place. Then He said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." They were struck with consternation. They remembered too well how narrowly He escaped falling a victim to His enemies at Jerusalem a few weeks before; and would He now

* See Trench on the Raising of Lazarus.

court death by again putting Himself in their power? They ventured to expostulate with Him: "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" Jesus answered, somewhat obscurely to *us*, though it was doubtless plain to *them*: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." The meaning seems to be, "*a certain time* is appointed Me of My Father; until that time is accomplished, My enemies have no power over Me. There is no real danger, My day is not yet expired, and I may therefore go to Judea with safety, and you also. Only let us walk in the light from heaven, and we have nothing to fear. When we walk in earthly darkness, then indeed there is imminent peril."

Still, their apprehensions, which were partly selfish, were not quieted; and He therefore said to them in words ever beautiful and memorable: "Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." They could only understand Him in the literal sense; "Lord," said they, "if he sleep he shall do well." He has then passed the crisis of his disease and will speedily recover. But Jesus was speaking of another sleep, of the deep slumber of the grave. He then told the disciples plainly, "Lazarus is dead," and added, "for your sakes I am glad I was not there; to the intent ye might believe. Nevertheless let us go unto him." "Had I been there, and restored him before life was extinct, your faith would have gained less than it will by what you are about to witness." The disciples are all silenced except *Thomas*, who, though brave and faithful and ready to follow his Master to the death, can only believe so far as he *sees*. He thinks that Jesus is going to His death. He does not, however, forsake Him, but says to his fellow-

disciples in a paroxysm of love and unbelief: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Bravely spoken, Thomas, from your stand-point. You, who accompany your Lord to Judea with a sad determination to 'die with Him, shall go *without* Him, by and by,—yet not without Him, alone, yet not alone,—to the ends of the earth, proclaiming Him as your risen Saviour, *your Lord and your God*.

The journey is well-nigh accomplished. Bethany is at hand; they have even now reached the outskirts of the town, and there they pause near the sepulchre of Lazarus. Meanwhile some one carries the tidings to Martha, who, without informing her sister, as it would seem, immediately went and met the Lord. "Lord," said she, "if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Then, a vague hope springing up in her heart, a hope which as speedily vanished, she added, "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Jesus saith unto her, "*Thy brother shall rise again.*" "I know that he shall rise again," replied Martha, "in the resurrection at the last day." She says this, not with cheerful hope, but with sadness. "Alas, must I wait till *then*? Must I make the journey of life without him,—without *him* who has been dearer to me than life itself?" This is the language of natural affection. How often does the mourner, when he stands at the grave of one he loves, feel that the assurance of a glorious resurrection at the last day is cold comfort! It seems long to wait. We would have our loved ones with us *now*; we would break through the separation-wall; we would constrain their unbound spirits into bonds again; like Orpheus in search of his lost Eurydice, we would willingly descend into hades to bring them back. This seems to have been the feeling with which Martha confessed her faith in the resurrection. A moment ago, she did entertain a vague hope that Jesus would do something won-

derful for her relief; but now she thinks of her brother as lying in the "cold obstruction" of the grave till the *last day*, and all hope dies within her.

But the very purpose of this affliction is to elevate her faith above all natural affection, above all accidents and circumstances, above reason itself. Our Lord proceeds, therefore, to unfold to her His glorious prerogatives as the Giver of life. She has just expressed her confidence in Him as an effectual *intercessor*, who obtains of God whatever He asks; it is needful for her to learn,—and her sorrow has made her humble and susceptible,—that Jesus has *life in Himself*; that there is fulness of power and divinity *in His own person*; and now having thus prepared the way, He adds those memorable words, which every child in Christendom knows by heart, which every pious mourner has learned to love as the well-spring of heavenly comfort: "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD YET SHALL HE LIVE; AND WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE." These sublime words reveal to us that death, the power before whom all earthly potentates go down, is yet in conflict with One mightier than himself, with One whose assured triumph over the great destroyer is dwelt upon more at length in another part of this work.

We return to Martha, now disciplined by sorrow to comprehend the sublime teachings of the Lord. When He had spoken these life-giving words, He asked her, "*Believest thou this?*" She said unto Him, "Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world." In believing that He was the Christ, she believed in Him as the resurrection and the life, for even the Jews held that the Messiah would raise the dead. She did not, however, as yet understand the mighty miracle which was about to be wrought. She

had now an *implicit faith*, but it was general; not a specific faith that here and now Lazarus would be restored to life.

At this point probably Jesus inquired for Mary; so Martha returned home and called her sister secretly, saying to her, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." We do not wonder that Mary arose quickly and came to Christ with affectionate haste. It is natural, too, that the friends who were with her should think that she had gone to the grave to weep there, for in the first days of mourning among the Jews, the nearest relatives often visited the grave of the deceased. The Jews therefore followed Mary, as she went weeping to the place where Jesus was, and they wept with her. How like her to fall down at His feet,—which Martha had not done,—as she exclaimed, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." These were the very words of Martha, proving how those sisters had longed for the presence of their adored Friend in their time of trouble. There was no conversation between Jesus and Mary, for He knew that her faith was already equal to the emergency. But when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also, He groaned in spirit and was troubled. "Where have ye laid him?" He asked. They conducted Him to the grave, which was a cave, or vault, closed with a stone at its mouth.

"JESUS WEPT."

Some honest and pious minds have found a difficulty in the fact that Jesus wept and groaned in spirit, when He knew how soon Lazarus would be restored. Such persons have not deeply pondered the fact that Jesus, though the Son of God from eternity, was true man, having all human sensibilities and a full and lively sympathy with His brethren. He stood in the presence of death. One of His dearest friends lay in that gloomy vault. He loved Lazarus somewhat as He loved John.

They were familiar, confidential friends. After a painful sickness he had died; not in appearance, but in reality; he was even now in the dread world of spirits. That he was soon to be summoned back to life did not make his death the less real. The Jews who stood by drew the right inference from His sorrow: "Behold how He loved him!" And then as a FRIEND Jesus felt the deep anguish of Martha and Mary as His own. We must even go further, and conceive of Him at this moment as having in view the ravages of sin in this world through all ages. He was united in nature and sympathy to a dying race. He knew how many were at that moment passing through the dark valley; He knew how many generations had already been swept away by the destroyer. He came into the world to bear the griefs of all mankind, and we can not doubt that, while standing at the grave of Lazarus, He did bear them. Those were the tears of a tender and compassionate elder Brother, and He sustained this relation not only to the mourning family at Bethany but to all mankind. He was then and there weeping over all the dead and in sympathy with all the bereaved. But no such reflections appear to have occurred to the Jews who witnessed the sorrow of Jesus; for, somewhat maliciously, they said one to another, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man, Lazarus, should not have died?" If the healing of the man born blind was a real miracle, He must have had power to heal Lazarus; He loved him so much, He would have done it had He been able. They began to question whether there was not some mistake or illusion in the case of the blind man. But their doubts were to be soon dispelled.

Jesus now directed them to take away the stone from the door of the sepulchre. Martha reminded Him of the probable condition of the body; not that we believe that

putrefaction had really taken place; on the contrary, it is most reasonable to infer that the body had been miraculously preserved, for otherwise the miracle would have had something of a *monstrous* character. Martha's language conveyed a natural *impression*, not in that case a statement of the fact. Nevertheless her suggestion shows how little she as yet looked for the great deliverance which Christ was about to work out for her. He more distinctly intimated his purpose: "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the salvation of God?" When the stone was removed, Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." We may imagine the bystanders looking into the open tomb with awe and solemn expectation. Nor did they wait long, for when He had thus spoken, Jesus cried with a loud voice,—with the very voice which will raise the dead at the last day,—"*Lazarus, come forth.*" That "voice pierces the dull ear of the dead; the spirit returns to the mouldering frame; the life-blood courses through the shrivelled veins; the limbs heave and stir; and the late occupant of the sepulchre appears at its mouth, with his burial garments about him, his pale lips opening with thanksgivings, and his glazed eye kindling with light, as he raises it in adoring homage to the face of his Deliverer. Loving hands unwind his grave-clothes. Loving arms fold him in a warm embrace. Loving hearts welcome him back to earth."*

There is something mysterious, and almost tantalizing in the reserve of the inspired writers touching many things which we would give much to know. John was an eye-witness of this stupendous miracle; he saw Lazarus

* Ide's "Bible Pictures," page 257. A book of great power and beauty.

come forth from the sepulchre ; he doubtless accompanied him and his sisters to their home ; he must have had many conversations with him afterwards ; he could have given a full account of his subsequent life ; but he has not left us even one short sentence to satisfy our curiosity ; he has left us so much, and only so much, as was necessary to show forth the love and power and glory of his adorable Master. Lazarus himself seems to have been silent in respect to that dread world of spirits, the secrets of which he had known by experience. Perhaps he found those secrets unutterable in mortal speech ; perhaps his lips were sealed by an express prohibition. It was not the purpose of the evangelists to divert the attention of their readers from Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life. Lazarus, after all, is nothing : Christ is all in all.

The raising of Lazarus was undoubtedly our Lord's most illustrious miracle. It created a profound sensation not only among the eye-witnesses, but also in Jerusalem, and throughout the whole country. Many of those who saw it, having prepared and susceptible minds, believed ; but others, though they could not deny the reality and the greatness of the miracle, persisted in rejecting Christ. Actuated by no friendly feelings, they hastened to the Pharisees in Jerusalem and gave them an account of what they had seen. The Sanhedrim was immediately convened to deliberate upon the matter. The healing of a man born blind, and the raising of a dead man to life, were miracles so stupendous and so public that there was every reason to apprehend that Jesus would be speedily acknowledged by the whole nation as the Messiah. So, when the council was assembled, they said one to another : "What do we ? for this Man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone all men will believe on Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." It has been thought that this was not spoken

sincerely, but was intended to alarm the more moderate members of the council, some of whom were suspected of looking too favorably on the mission of Jesus; but it would seem more probable that they were really in great alarm.

From their stand-point, there was evident ground for alarm. Their views of the Messiah were altogether worldly. They conceived of Him as a temporal deliverer and king, who would emancipate the nation from the Roman yoke. And this was the expectation and earnest wish of the nation. The people now had their eyes fixed upon Jesus, and were ready, whenever He would put Himself at their head, to take up arms against their foreign oppressors. They had already sought, on one occasion, to take Him by *force* and make Him their King. Now, while the priests and Pharisees were not averse to a revolution which should expel the hated Romans, and were, perhaps, at this very moment looking forward to a war for Jewish independence, any immediate attempt, especially under the leadership of Jesus the Nazarene, seemed to promise nothing but disaster to their own order and to the country. Had Jesus been *one of themselves*, they would have fanatically rushed into the contest; but they dreaded His reign more than the despotism of the Romans. The latter left their institutions untouched; but they well knew that they could expect no favor from such a prince as Jesus, who had already assailed the corruptions, denounced the hypocrisy, and greatly diminished the influence of the scribes and Pharisees. Let Him be once raised to the throne of David, and they knew their occupation would be gone. Besides, notwithstanding they could not deny His miracles, they did not believe He was the Messiah; they held Him, at best, a half-crazed enthusiast. If He should be proclaimed King, the legions would be upon them, and, making no

distinction between the innocent and guilty, would not only destroy their holy city and temple, but whatever remained of their nationality. It must be confessed that Jewish politicians in that age could not well have reasoned otherwise, for like professed politicians of all ages, they were blind to the real designs of Providence.

But while certain members of the Sanhedrim who were moderate and conciliatory in temper, proposed half-measures, there was one bold, bad man among them who had neither fear, nor conscience himself, and despised them in others; this was Caiaphas the High Priest, a Sadducee, subtle and cruel. He arose with a sneer, if we may judge from his contemptuous language, and addressing himself to his more scrupulous colleagues,—among whom, we must not forget, were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea,—said, “Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not.” *He* spoke as a politician:—“The nation is in danger. If this Nazarene goes on making disciples, He will soon be proclaimed King by the unthinking multitude; and then our nationality will be extinguished in blood. This must somehow be prevented. I laugh at the cowardly suggestions of my well-meaning colleagues. True, Jesus has not been tried; but, whether innocent or guilty, it is better that one should die for all, than that the whole nation should perish.” Thus, under the pretext of the *public good*,—always the plea of unprincipled statesmen,—Jesus was doomed to death by the highest functionary of the Jewish church.

So far everything is plain; but the evangelist has appended a comment to these words of Caiaphas which has perplexed many readers:—“This spake he not of himself; but being High Priest that same year, he *prophesied* that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation

only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." There is no doubt that the evangelist is to be understood literally; he means to say that Caiaphas really *prophesied*, and that he prophesied because he was High Priest that year. Now, that a wicked man may be endowed with foresight of future events, and that, under a temporary divine afflatus, he may predict them, seems clear enough. Balaam is an instance in point. In the words of Olshausen: "If we keep in mind the consideration that John did not mean to represent every High Priest as *necessarily* prophesying, but to show that the High Priest was the natural medium, through whom God *might* at times reveal Himself, this view harmonizes with the circle of ideas entertained by the evangelist, as well as with Scripture."

Caiaphas, then, is to be regarded as unconsciously predicting the death of Christ. St. John adds by way of comment: "That he should die not for that nation only, but that He should gather together the children of God that were scattered abroad." "The death of Christ was to unite Jew and Gentile in one body, breaking down the middle wall of partition between them, and abolishing in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, and so of twain making in Himself one new man, so making PEACE." In other words, the *cross* was to be the great centre of attraction, which should draw into a holy and blessed harmony the rent and dislocated members of the human family. Such, then, was the prophetic counsel of Caiaphas, which he uttered all unconscious of its divine meaning, and which his colleagues understood only in the more obvious sense. This counsel was adopted; and the intentions of individual enemies of Christ were thus formally sanctioned by the Sanhedrim. Henceforth they watched for a favorable opportunity of executing their bloody purpose. Jesus

was not ignorant of their machinations ; had He not been omniscient, we can not doubt that Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea would have informed Him of His danger. He withdrew from the neighborhood to a city called Ephraim, which was in the desert a few miles north-east of Jerusalem, and there He dwelt with His disciples in deep seclusion, till His time was come. That time was at hand. Only a few weeks were to elapse before He should go up to Jerusalem, and “the baptism of blood” should be accomplished.

We may feel entirely certain that those few weeks were mainly employed in training and instructing His disciples, whose views were even yet exceedingly defective and vacillating. For more than three years the Master had been with them ; but they were yet mere children in knowledge, and would indeed continue to be so till the Comforter should come and guide them into all truth. One office of the Comforter was to *bring to their remembrance* all that their Master had said. Many of His discourses which were obscure to them at the time, and soon faded from their memory, were restored and made clear under the supernatural illumination of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, therefore, continued to deposit in their minds treasures of heavenly wisdom, the value of which they then but dimly understood.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST JOURNEY: THE TEN LEPERS.

JESUS DEPARTS FROM EPHRAIM FOR JERUSALEM—HEALS THE TEN LEPERS—THE PHARISEES DEMAND WHEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD SHOULD COME—OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE TO HIS DISCIPLES—PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE.

LUKE XVII. 11-37; XVIII. 1-8.

ALTHOUGH the Passover was now at hand, and multitudes of the people were already going up to Jerusalem to purify themselves in preparation for the feast, Jesus and His disciples still remained in Ephraim. This delay was the occasion of much speculation at Jerusalem; the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that His arrival should be promptly announced to them, that they might seize upon Him before He had time to enlist the multitude in His favor. Our Lord at length set out on this His last memorable journey to Jerusalem, directing His course by the border of Galilee and Samaria towards the Jordan. He would seem to have chosen this route, in order to fall in with the multitude of pilgrims, one body of whom would naturally come down by the road along the western bank, and another by the eastern, crossing at the fords near Jericho. His object in thus throwing Himself in the track of these multitudes, appears to have been to reach the largest number with His teaching, and as the time for concealment was now past, to enter Jerusalem with the greater publicity.

Coming in His route to a certain village, He was met by ten lepers, who it would seem, from His progress

being widely known, had collected in a body for that purpose,—a melancholy group of earth's most miserable creatures, despairing for years, yet now agitated by a hope of release from their sufferings. They appear to have had faith, yet rather,—as their address would indicate,—a faith in Jesus as a mere prophet. Sensible of their own loathsomeness, and perhaps not wishing to communicate to Him a ceremonial uncleanness, they did not venture to approach Him, as others of their class who better knew His compassionate nature had done, but stood afar off and lifted up their voices with that most pitiful cry, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" Their appeal met with a prompt response, though not improbably a different one from that expected. It was, however, like that of Elisha to Naaman, calculated to test their faith thoroughly. "Go, show yourselves to the priests," was the simple and almost curt reply. The order was promptly obeyed. The sufferers at once went on their way, whether perplexed with doubt or full of joyful hope, we have no means of knowing. However, they had faith enough to obey, and divine love met them in the way with a sudden and perfect cure.

And here comes in a striking exemplification of the difference between formal obedience and genuine love. Nine of the number,—Jews, we may infer from their regard for the ceremonial law,—go straight forward in formal accordance with the command of Jesus, rejoiced no doubt at the cure wrought in them, but with no thankful recognition of the Saviour as its author. One, however,—to the rescue of our human nature from the shame of utter ingratitude,—one, a poor Samaritan outcast, overcome with joy and thankfulness and love, forgets everything but his benefactor. Turning back he glorified God with a loud voice, and falling down at the feet of Jesus, poured out the fulness of his heart in thankful adoration.

And now he was doubly blessed. Faith and obedience brought soundness into his diseased body; gratitude and love bring health and peace into his soul; for the gracious words,—“Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole,”—as spoken by Jesus, carried with them beyond all doubt the assurance of sins forgiven.

As our Lord was thus proceeding on His way to Jerusalem, some of the Pharisees asked Him when the kingdom of God was to come. The question was doubtless propounded in a spirit of ridicule. Jesus had said much of the coming of this kingdom; yet, so far as they could see, no such coming appeared imminent, or even probable. “At this rate of progress, when is this wonderful kingdom, to the headship of which you make such extraordinary pretensions, likely to be established?” Fathoming their evil design, Jesus answered them with almost contemptuous brevity. “It is simply absurd,” said He, “to expect to determine the approach of this event by external signs, since it is to come so suddenly as to put to naught all worldly-wise calculation; and it would be mere folly to reveal to you those signs, if there were any,—so long as you are blind to the morning that has already dawned.”

Turning from the Pharisees as unworthy of further notice, our Lord proceeds to address His disciples on the topic thus suggested. He shows them that, although the kingdom of God is even now among them, they will, under the pressure of manifold tribulations, long for its speedy triumph, and a blessed end of all their sorrows. He cautions them, however, against placing any confidence in the supposed signs of His coming, which will be blown abroad among the credulous to their destruction. They need give themselves no concern as to signs; when the day of the Lord comes, it will come too suddenly for calculations to avail; its presence will be unmistakable as

that of the lightning, which, shooting across the heavens, lights the whole landscape with its revealing blaze. He gives them a new warning, that, while they are secretly dreaming of preferment in His kingdom, He, their Lord, is going speedily down into the depths of ignominious suffering, since only out of His perfect humiliation comes His complete exaltation.

He portrays in language of terrible vividness the woes about to fall upon Jerusalem, woes typical of the final doom of the ungodly, as were the overwhelming waters of the flood in the days of Noah, or the flames from which Lot escaped when the cities of the plain went down. Apparently on this occasion, and probably with the design of impressing upon His disciples the importance of prayer as a preparation for impending trials, and support under them, Jesus utters the parable of the Unjust Judge and the Importunate Widow. The simple argument of this is, that if persevering prayer secured an answer from an unjust human magistrate, by just so much the more as God is more wise, just and merciful than man, will persistent prayer prevail with Him, and that therefore men ought always to pray and not to faint.

“There was in a city a judge which feared not God neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them. I tell you, He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?”

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST JOURNEY: PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN—THE TWO MEN CHARACTERIZED—THE PHARISEE'S PRAYER—THE PRAYER OF THE PUBLICAN—JESUS GIVES A DECISION ON THE LAW OF DIVORCE—HIS VIEW OF CELIBACY—THE APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE OF MARRIAGE—CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN—THE YOUNG RULER—DISCOURSE ON THE DANGER OF RICHES—PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.

MATTHEW XIX. 3-30. MARK X. 13-31. LUKE XVIII. 15-30.

HUMAN nature is the same in all ages. We are not, therefore, surprised to read that our Lord encountered certain persons who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. Self-righteousness and contempt of others were not peculiar to the ancient Pharisees; but the following parable was drawn forth by some particular manifestation of these—their characteristic vices:

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner? I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalt-

eth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

This parable is not only wonderfully graphic but loaded with divine meaning. We see the Pharisee, in his long robes and broad phylacteries, passing through the streets of the Holy City, up to the temple. Every look, every gesture, proclaims loudly, "I am righteous ; I am a peculiar favorite of heaven ; I do not belong to the herd of vulgar sinners ; stand aside, ye common and unclean, and let me pass on to my devotions." And the multitude reverently stand aside, while the Pharisee enters the sacred courts, feeling that his presence imparts additional sanctity to the place. But who is this that follows with downcast eyes and creeping steps, as if the very pavement was polluted by his tread ? He is dressed in the garb of a civil officer, but there is neither self-respect nor authority in his bearing, and the people eye him askance with scarcely suppressed execrations. This man is a publican, a Jew, yet a Roman tax-gatherer. He also passes into the temple.

Let us also enter, and witness the devotions of these so different worshipers. Lo, yonder is our Pharisee, standing apart from the multitude, as if afraid of contamination. He begins : "God, I thank Thee,"—surely a good beginning. What more appropriate than thanksgiving to the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift ? "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are ;" this also sounds well ; for he seems to acknowledge that he differs from other men by the grace of God ; and what could be more humble and orthodox ? There is, however, something in it which we do not quite like ; he seems to put himself in one category, and his fellow-men in another ; he has no sympathy with his brethren in their sins and sorrows ; he separates himself from them even in the great congregation. But

wherein, O Pharisee, dost thou differ from other men? "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers." Hast thou then come up to the temple to confess the sins of other men? Dost thou stand here as an accuser of thy unhappy brethren? Dost thou regard it as meritorious that thou art not guilty of crimes worthy of stripes and imprisonment? But see; as he utters the words, "extortioners, unjust, adulterers," his eyes, in this strange way of praying, fall on a shrinking form in the distance, and his brow lowers, and his lip curls: "I thank Thee that I am not as this publican." Out upon thee, thou hypocrite! Hast thou no pity? Seest thou not that his heart is breaking with some great sorrow? Thou scornful Pharisee, thou hast told us what thou art not; now tell us what thou art; give us an inventory of thy virtues and good deeds: "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all I possess." Yes, we know; but where are judgment, mercy and faith? where is love to God and man? where is the broken and contrite heart that trembleth at God's word? where is the humble walking before God? The Pharisee's prayer is ended; and a strange prayer it is. There is not one word of confession; not a petition of any kind. It is a crystallized specimen of pure, self-righteous egotism.

Let us turn to the publican. He also has come up to the temple to pray. It is unwonted business for him, but he *must* pray or his heart will break. He has only one thing to ask of God, and he asks in the most direct and simple words: "GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!" He is alone in spirit before God, as conscious of his selfhood as the Pharisee, but in his case the ego is felt to be polluted and guilty: "have mercy on me *the* sinner!" As if he were the one sinner in the universe, separated from all other men by his infinite guilt. His prayer is for MERCY. He has no thought of any righteousness of

his own, or of earning justification by good works, or of making satisfaction to the law by voluntary suffering. The very phrase, "be merciful," carries with it a reference to atonement by sacrifice. He looks for forgiveness through the mere compassion of God, and to that he makes his appeal. There he stands, beating his breast, and not daring to lift his eyes to heaven. Suddenly, methinks a change comes over his countenance; the expression of anguish disappears; and as he leaves the place his step is lighter and his form more erect. Two words, LOVE and PEACE, are plainly written on his lately clouded and tearful face. As he walks out into the streets, the sky bends lovingly over him, and a Father's eyes look down tenderly upon him; for "he went down to his house JUSTIFIED." Joy to that house! The Pharisee also goes down to his own house; but the heavens above are brass, and the JUSTICE to which he has appealed gathers in a thick cloud over his head.

It must have been about this time that the Pharisees came to Jesus with a question much debated among themselves, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" It is not quite clear whether their "tempting" Him was merely to test his knowledge of the law, or to draw from Him what would expose Him to the wrath of Herod Antipas and his infamous paramour, Herodias, whose hands were still reeking with the blood of John the Baptist. Possibly both motives may have prompted the question. A strict doctrine of divorce had been taught by the famous Rabbi Shammai, who asserted that the dissolution of the marriage tie was unlawful except for the single cause of adultery. Rabbi Hillel and his school, on the contrary, held that arbitrary divorce was allowed by the law of Moses.* Jesus did not hesi-

* Deuteronomy xxiv. 1.

tate to give an authoritative decision of this great question, a question, in that age, of immense practical importance. The abuse of divorce had almost dissolved the very frame-work of Roman society; and it was working great evil even among the Jews, a comparatively chaste and moral people. It was important that the true doctrine and law of marriage should be given to the church by the Master Himself; for it belongs to the very foundation of social virtue. In this case, therefore, our Lord exercised His function as Legislator, and enunciated a law which will be binding on nations and individuals to the end of time:

“And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart, he wrote you this precept; but from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh; so then they are no more twain but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away, committeth adultery.”

These words of our Lord forbid divorce by the husband or the civil magistrate, except for a single cause. Neither Milton nor any later writer has made good the argument for more. Jesus found the law of marriage in the history of the original pair. God made man male and female, not *two* but *ONE*—“one flesh,”—one living whole. The union of husband and wife was to be one of life and soul; and to be indissoluble, till the flesh itself is dissolved. Nothing which does not, of itself, destroy

this unity in duality—and nothing but adultery does destroy it—can justify the separation of those whom God hath joined together. This doctrine seemed hard to the disciples: “If the case of a man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” In reply, our Lord does not deny the lawfulness of celibacy, provided it be “*for the kingdom of heaven’s sake*.” “His decision was opposed not
 * only to the old Hebrew notion that celibacy was *per se* ignominious, but also to the ascetic doctrine which made it *per se* a superior condition of life; a doctrine so widely diffused in later times. He taught that the heart must be devoted to the interests of the kingdom of God, and these must modify all the relations of life, as necessity may require.”*

The words of the apostle are the necessary complement of those of our Master: “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

* Neander’s “Life of Christ,” pages 330, 321.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”*

It is clearly the teaching of the apostle, that the union of husband and wife is one, not only of physical life, but of soul and spirit, a union so sacred that it requires a reciprocal love like that between Christ and His church; a union, therefore, which can only be dissolved by the sin of conjugal infidelity, a sin equivalent to the apostasy of the church from her Head.

It is not improbable that our Lord's discourse on marriage led to some conversation on *children*, and especially on their relation to the kingdom of God. This may have been the occasion of the beautiful incident which three of the evangelists have so carefully recorded in connection with that discourse. When it is said that little children were brought to Him, it is impossible to doubt that they were brought by their parents. The popular pictures doubtless rightly make *the mothers* most conspicuous in this scene. Women and children were powerfully drawn to Jesus. They felt that He was in sympathy with them, that He understood them, that it was good for them to be near Him, that the very glance of His eye, the very touch of His finger, brought to them benediction and joy.

These mothers brought their “little children,” (Matthew), their “young children,” (Mark), their “infants,” (Luke,) to the Saviour, that He should touch them, and pray. The apostles, annoyed and displeased at what probably struck them as foolish superstition, and wishing to save their Master from needless trouble, rebuked the persons who thus interrupted His discourse; but Jesus, touched by every demonstration of love and faith, was in His turn much displeased, and rebuked the apostles

* Ephesians v. 22-32.

for their unauthorized interference: "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, He shall in no wise enter therein. Having said this, He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them." We can not doubt that these children were the better, then and through life, for this blessing of Christ. Though they were mere infants, incapable of understanding His words, or of believing in Him as the Son of God, they were capable of receiving real benefit from the laying on of His hands and from His prayers. And the benefit thus imparted was not of a physical character. There is no intimation that they were diseased and were brought to Him to be healed; but the rebuke addressed to the parents by the disciples, implies the contrary. The benefit sought and received by them was purely spiritual,—the blessing of *grace*. It is evident, therefore, that little-children may be the real though unconscious recipients of saving grace, and may, therefore, belong to the kingdom of God. Our Lord not only declares it, but also asserts as a universal principle, that *none but children* can enter that kingdom. Those who have come to mature age without becoming subjects of His kingdom, *must again become children, even babes, by being born again; so that of children the kingdom is composed*. Thus Jesus sets forth the great truth that the children of the covenant, children that are brought to Him by believing parents, are to be regarded as in the state and grace of regeneration, and therefore as already entitled to the privileges of the kingdom of God. It is not a vain thing for parents to present their children in faith to Christ, especially in holy baptism; and assuredly His life-giving touch and gracious benediction will not be withheld.

After Jesus had left the house and gone forth into the highway, a certain man who was a ruler—possibly of the Sanhedrim, more likely of the synagogue,—“came running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, saying: Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?” This man certainly was not a Pharisee; his appearance was attractive; his approach to Jesus indicated reverence and earnestness, and his question was the most important which he could have asked. Considering his wealth and his high social standing, his desire to lay hold on eternal life, thus publicly expressed, was evidence of a degree of moral elevation unusual in his class. It is not certain that he regarded Jesus as more than a great and wise Teacher; but his kneeling favors the opinion that he revered Him as a Prophet. Our Lord, wishing to lead him to a knowledge of his own character in the sight of God, said to him, “Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but ONE, that is, God.” God alone is absolutely good: whether I am good in that sense I say not; but what art *thou* in the sight of this good God? Thou knowest His commandments. The young man asked to which of the commandments Jesus especially referred. “Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The young man, ignorant of his own heart, and thinking only of external obedience, answered with sincerity, “All these things have I kept from my youth up.” He was steeped in self-righteousness, though he knew it not. He was so frank, so truthful though so mistaken, and he had such noble impulses notwithstanding his spiritual blindness, that Jesus loved him. He was drawn to him by his natural qualities, as He had been to Lazarus and John; and had he not lacked one thing he would probably have been one of a glorious trio, *the three*

friends of Jesus. "One thing," said Jesus, "thou lackest: go thy way, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, take up the cross and follow Me." Jesus doubtless saw that in the heart of this noble young man, love of the world was so despotic that it could only be dethroned by the absolute sacrifice of all his earthly possessions. What he lacked was *love—love to give his all for Christ's sake.* This unexpected answer of Christ overwhelmed the inquirer with distress. He wanted eternal life; but he wanted also riches, and the applause of men. He could not renounce the world for the sake of becoming the follower of Him who had not where to lay His head; so he went away sorrowing.

As he departed Jesus turned to His disciples, and said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Perceiving their blank astonishment at His words, He explained; "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." The amazement of the disciples at these words passed all bounds, and they exclaimed, "Who then can be saved?" This is a plain proof that they had not up to this time, understood Him to teach the doctrine of unconditional poverty as necessary to salvation. And He did not teach it now. On the contrary, He set forth the extreme difficulty with which the hearts of the rich can be detached from their possessions,—their idol,—without which, assuredly, they can not be saved. "With men," Jesus said, "this is impossible; but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Peter, not we think, to boast of the sacrifices he had made, here exclaimed, "Behold we have forsaken all and followed Thee: what shall we have therefore?" The

answer of Jesus is memorable and "very full of comfort:" "Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first." Peter's question seemed to intimate, that the sacrifice which he and his fellow-disciples had made, merited some eminent reward in the kingdom of God. Jesus would not leave him in this error; but proceeded to show, in a parable, that the rewards of the heavenly kingdom were not of debt but of grace; that they who were called first, and labored longest, have no more claim upon God than those who were called last; but that to all the covenant promise shall be fulfilled in its integrity.*

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and he said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again, he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the

* Alford *in loco*.

vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen."

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST JOURNEY: THE AMBITIOUS DISCIPLES.

JESUS PREDICTS HIS SUFFERINGS AND DEATH—SALOME'S AMBITIOUS REQUEST FOR HER SONS—OUR LORD'S DISPOSAL OF THE MATTER—INDIGNATION OF THE OTHER DISCIPLES—OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE ON ECCLESIASTICAL AMBITION—HEALING OF BLIND BARTIMEUS.

MATTHEW XX. 17-34. MARK X. 32-52. LUKE XVIII. 1-10; 31-34.

JESUS was rapidly advancing towards Jerusalem, the fatal city. The route He had chosen, for reasons already mentioned, was a circuitous one, leading through the valley of the Jordan and the city of Jericho. The caravan from Galilee and beyond Jordan to which He and His disciples appear to have attached themselves, was by this time probably descending the barren mountains which slope towards the Jordan from the west. The forest of palms and the city of Jericho were doubtless in view in the distance, while away to the right stretched the jagged range of the white limestone hills of Judea. The sight of these distant hills would naturally suggest to the disciples whither they were going, and the dangers that must attend the journey. They were "amazed" and "afraid" at the prospect. Possibly also there was that in the countenance and bearing of their Lord, which added to their concern. Their feelings, however, were not wholly those of natural terror. Though their views of Jesus and His mission were crude and defective, they still had living faith in Him as the Son of God, and were

looking and longing for His full manifestation to Israel. And He was now about to respond to this expectation. The crisis was at hand. And though they had no doubt as to the final issue, they apprehended a fearful commotion and struggle. Jesus would be recognized as the Messiah and His glorious kingdom established; but considering the hostility of the powerful sects arrayed against Him, and the strength of the Roman authorities, what dreadful conflicts might intervene!

Knowing what was passing in their minds; and knowing, too, that while He was to enter Jerusalem and the temple as the Holy King, amidst the acclamations of seemingly loyal multitudes, all this was speedily to be followed by the treason of Judas, the mock trial, the execrations of the people, and the cruel death of the cross, our Lord again took the twelve apart and plainly declared to them His approaching sufferings and death: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again." This was sufficiently explicit, but the apostles understood it not. They could not believe that He whom they looked upon as the King of Israel was about to suffer a shameful death. Precisely what He meant they could not conjecture; but they seemed to think He was speaking figuratively. *Danger*, they knew, was at hand; but they looked for some sudden, supernatural deliverance. They were, however, perplexed and dispirited by what they had heard, and followed Jesus trembling.

It was probably about this time that they joined the Galilee caravan, in which were doubtless many friends and fellow-disciples, all overjoyed to see once more their

beloved Master. It would seem that the loving and enthusiastic Salome here met her two sons, and perhaps heard from their lips what Jesus had just said. In this view there was something noble in the request which she preferred in their behalf. Coming to Jesus and "worshipping" Him, she presented to Him James and John, who themselves joined in the petition, saying, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom." Doubtless Salome truly honored Jesus as the Messiah, and though her prayer was tainted with selfish ambition, we must by no means think of her as destitute of a higher and purer feeling. Surely a mother may lawfully ask that her sons may be near to Christ in danger, and reign with Him in glory. The fault of Salome lay in that low conception of Christ's kingdom, from which her faith was not wholly freed. She evidently thought it was about to appear, and she longed to see her sons occupy the chief places in it. We can not but think that James and John joined in the request with clearer and loftier views. They were already closely associated with Jesus, and John *always* sat on His right hand; he was "that disciple whom Jesus loved;" he had long been in intimate communion with Him; and he may have aspired, more from love than ambition, to be near his adorable Master in His kingdom. Besides, it is probable that the "sons of thunder" intended to assure our Lord of their unflinching fidelity in the time of trial which was at hand. Though He had spoken to them of His rejection, and condemnation by the chief priests and scribes, and of the cruel outrages He was soon to suffer from the Gentiles; though He had plainly told them that He was about to be crucified, they professed their unshaken faith in His final triumph, and their willingness to cast in their lot with Him for weal or for woe.

We believe that Jesus regarded the petitioners with

pitying eyes, as He said to them, "Ye know not what ye ask : can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" As if He had said, "Alas you know not what is involved in your request. Are you sure that you can drink the cup of death, which I am about to drink even to the dregs? Can you go down into those depths of suffering in which I am about to be overwhelmed?" The two disciples answer with an assurance which almost makes us shudder, "WE CAN." Their sincerity is as undoubted as their ignorance. They had unwittingly asked that they might take the place of the two thieves who were crucified with Christ; but though we may doubt whether they would have spoken so confidently, had they known the dread baptism for which they offered themselves, we do not question their earnest purpose to follow their Lord at all hazards. Their devoted love to Jesus, however, was tinged with natural self-reliance: "*We are able.*" Surely they know not what they say.

Our Lord, knowing the love that lies at the bottom of their hearts, deals with them tenderly: "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup; and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." Did James remember these words when he fell a martyr under the persecuting rage of Herod? Did John recall this prophecy when he was an exile in Patmos for the testimony of Jesus? They *did* drink of the cup of Christ; they *were* baptized with His baptism; and they did not falter when the trial came, but they found that all their sufficiency was of God. They were enabled to redeem the pledge which they ignorantly gave. Though they knew not the full extent of their promise, it sprang from the deep prophetic feeling of their hearts. And Jesus

took them at their word, and through His grace they kept that word unto death.

When the ten apostles saw how Salome and her sons had thus stolen the march on them, they were full of indignation. They regarded it as an attempt to circumvent them. Doubtless each of them thought that *he* had a special title to distinction in the kingdom of Christ. They were blinded by worldly feelings and motives. They were not unlike modern office-seekers, who surround a new dignitary with warm professions of devotion to his person and his interests, and who regard with angry jealousy the more favored among his clients. Now I would by no means intimate that the disciples were, *on the whole*, like the greedy parasites of a rising statesman. There was at least but *one* in the apostolic college open to such a comparison—I mean Judas Iscariot—but they were all jealous of the sons of Zebedee, and a bitter quarrel was imminent. Jesus, therefore, called them to Him and said to them: “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant—yea, the servant of all. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

In these marvellous words Christ lays open the inmost nature of His kingdom, and teaches the apostles how they may attain its highest honors and rewards. These are “prepared of the Father” for those who are the most humble and the most useful. Those who are as little children, artless and lowly in heart; those who are self-sacrificing servants of their brethren; who think no place and no labors degrading by which they can do good;

they shall be near Christ in His kingdom ; they shall sit on His right hand and on His left ; they shall enter into the joy and sit down on the throne of their Lord. Thus, in the kingdom of God, all preëminence rests on love, and love teaches us to serve others. Love in self-sacrifice is so mighty a power that those who manifest it in its highest energy attain to wide dominion. Men are true kings, even in this world, in proportion to the love that is in them. The disciples were not wrong in assuming that there were degrees of nearness to the Lord ; something of this kind existed at that very time. The seventy were further removed from Him than the twelve ; and among these again Peter, James and John stood nearest to Him, while only John lay in His bosom. The mistake lay in their confounding earthly with spiritual dominion. The former, founded on force and wielded by selfishness, passes naturally into oppression ; the latter, resting on moral influence, and exercised in love, blesses all who yield to its authority. The Saviour sets Himself before His followers as the perfect pattern of holy, self-sacrificing, ministering love, in which alone lies His royal power and preëminence.

Soon after this conversation the caravan passed through Jericho. It is probable that our Lord remained in the neighborhood of the city at least one night ; and He there wrought miracles concerning which the accounts of the evangelists differ. Matthew records the healing of *two* blind men, when Jesus left Jericho ; Mark mentions only *one* ; while Luke gives an account of a similar case when Jesus was about to enter the city. We are at liberty to accept any natural hypothesis which harmonizes the records. The city was a large one, and blindness a frequent disease of the climate. What is more probable than that a blind beggar was healed while Jesus was entering Jericho, and that, while he joyfully followed

his Benefactor, he bethought him of his late companions in affliction, and especially of his friend Bartimeus, who sat at the opposite gate? Using his new gift of sight, he hastened to apprise the sufferers of the Helper that was at hand, urging them to share in his own experience, and prompting the very words in which the petition was conveyed. We can not but regard it as highly probable that at least three blind men were healed in the neighborhood of Jericho. We select for narration the case of Bartimeus.

This poor man on being informed that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, began to cry out: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" He had heard of Jesus, and believed in Him as the promised Messiah. His importunity was so clamorous that many bade him hold his peace; but he thereupon became more earnest and importunate. At last Jesus paused and commanded the man to be called. See him casting away his garments and running to Jesus. "What wilt thou," said our Lord, "that I should do unto thee?" "Lord, that I may receive my sight." "Go thy way," said Jesus, "thy faith hath made thee whole." His *way*, after he was healed, was up to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST JOURNEY: CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS.

JERICHO AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD—ZACCHEUS—HE SEEKS TO SEE JESUS—
JESUS AT THE HOUSE OF ZACCHEUS—HEREDITARY PIETY A LAW OF
GOD'S KINGDOM—PARABLE OF THE TEN POUNDS.

LUKE XIX. 1-27.

JERICHO, in the time of Christ, was a city of great wealth and importance. It lay in a broad plain which is overhung on the west by that high and barren mountain, on which, according to tradition, our Saviour was assailed by the tempter, and bounded on the east by the mountains of Moab. In the midst of this plain flowed the Jordan, here about to lose its limpid waters in the Dead Sea. The climate, though hot and unhealthy in the summer, was, in winter, most delicious; hence, perhaps, it was a favorite residence of the priests. The broad valley was famous for its fertility, and for its stately groves of palm, balsam, cypress, fig and olive trees. It was indeed a region of perennial verdure and bloom, well deserving its name—*the land of heaven*. The city had been rebuilt and fortified by Herod the Great; and was afterwards greatly embellished by Archelaus, who brought water from a distance in costly aqueducts, the ruins of which are still visible. The city was rich in treasures of all kinds, for it lay near one of the fords of the Jordan, and on an important caravan road, thus sustaining important commercial relations with the east and north as well as with

Jerusalem. The revenues of the city had long been so important that the collection of them was entrusted only to men of energy and capacity. The head tax-gatherer of Jericho was a citizen of distinction and ability, though he could not hope to enjoy the good-will of the people. A publican in that age was regarded as a traitor to his country, and a renegade from his religion. He was treated as a heathen and an outcast. The Pharisees would have regarded themselves as defiled by entering his house or sitting with him at meat.

The chief officer of the revenue, when Jesus came to the city, was a man named Zaccheus, a Jew by blood, though virtually excommunicated on account of his employment. He was doubtless a man of capacity, well versed in human nature; a shrewd, perhaps somewhat unscrupulous man of the world, holding the bigotry of his nation in contempt, and not slow in returning scorn for scorn. A man of a different character would scarcely have accepted such an office under the Roman government; he would not certainly have been long retained in it. There is no evidence that he had been guilty of *extraordinary* extortion, though his employment was lucrative, and he had accumulated a large fortune. We infer from his own words to Jesus that his hands were by no means pure. Zaccheus had doubtless often heard of Jesus, and it is just possible that he was acquainted with Levi or Matthew who had also been a publican in Galilee. However this may be, the history almost compels us to suppose that there had been a preparatory work of divine grace in his heart. Probably he had begun to feel that he was an outcast from the society of the good; that his wealth was dearly purchased and unsatisfying. He felt that his life had been selfish, and who knows but *he* had sometimes cried, smiting on his breast, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" He had heard of Jesus and wished to

see Him, and this was in his case a matter of difficulty ; for, being a man of small stature, he was unable to overlook the multitude who thronged about the Saviour. He therefore ran ahead of the procession, and climbed up into a sycamore tree which stood by the way. Perched thus upon the tree he awaited the approach of Jesus.

Onward He comes, superhuman purity in every lineament and motion. O Zaccheus, why does such a sense of unworthiness—such a feeling of shame and compunction—weigh down thy heart? Whence this desire that thou too wert His disciple? Why does thy heart swell and thine eye moisten, as thou gazest down on that reverend form? Methinks I hear him murmur, “Oh, that I were not a publican and a sinner, for then I might come near Him and be reckoned among His friends!” Jesus approaches the sycamore tree. He stops; He looks up; He speaks: “Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.” Zaccheus can hardly believe his own ears; but he hastens down and joyfully conducts his unexpected but welcome Guest to his house. There probably Jesus spent the night. The people murmured aloud. How little they understood the heart of Christ or the nature of His mission! What they regarded as a reproach, was a true type of His whole ministry on earth. Jesus came from heaven to be the Guest of sinners. He passed by the dwellings of all the priests and Pharisees of Jericho, and sought the hospitality of a man held in universal detestation. So full of pity was the Son of man towards the sinful and lost.

Well, Jesus is at the house of Zaccheus, and while the Pharisees are scowling, and the multitude muttering without, great things are going on in that house. What discourse Jesus had with His host we know not; but we do know that the publican became a new man. It was the next morning, probably, that Zaccheus stood up be-

fore Christ, and said: "Lord, behold the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken away anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold." This was said with due deliberation. He had meditated the matter over night; and now he *stood up* to give his words a solemn formality. He had determined to give away unconditionally half of his estate, and he offered the legal four-fold restitution to those whom he had wronged. It is evident from this, that he had come honestly by the bulk of his property. He seems to confess, however, that he had in some cases extorted money by false accusation; and he declared his purpose to make ample satisfaction to all whom he had defrauded. And this was the best possible evidence of a true conversion,—our Saviour Himself being judge: "This day is salvation come to this house; forasmuch as he also is the son of Abraham; for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Zaccheus was beloved for the fathers' sake. He was a son of Abraham and an heir of the promise: "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee." That covenant was a rainbow that overarched all generations. When Jesus came in the flesh, "He took upon Him the seed of Abraham;" and the whole tenor of His life showed His special regard to the chosen race. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. To them must the gospel first be preached, unbelieving and obstinate though they were; they still bore the seal of the covenant, and were therefore entitled to the first offer of salvation. They were indeed lost, but they were *God's lost*, and forever dear to Him. In Zaccheus the Jew had been overlooked in the publican; the heir of the covenant in the agent of Roman despotism. Jesus recognized in him a lost child of Abraham and of God.

Here is disclosed a perpetual law of the kingdom of God. The children of believers, the heirs of the covenant,

may indeed renounce their birthright and perish through unbelief; but the general order of Christ's kingdom is not so. The history of true religion in the world is largely a family history. The taint of depravity is indeed transmitted to all, but the children of the covenant are in a special sense heirs of salvation; they can only be disinherited by their own incorrigible unbelief. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them."

Jesus now took His leave of Zaccheus and set His face towards Jerusalem. The disciples, exalted by all they had witnessed at Jericho, to a high pitch of enthusiasm, thought that the kingdom of God would immediately appear. It would seem that the parable of the Pounds was spoken in the way soon after they set out on their toilsome walk to Bethany. "There were three points on which He especially sought to fix their attention, namely, the opposition He was to encounter at Jerusalem; His departure from them and return at a later period to subdue His foes and establish His kingdom in triumph; and, finally, their duty to labor actively in the interval, and not to await in indolence, the achievement of victory by other means without their coöperation."*

"A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those servants to be called unto him

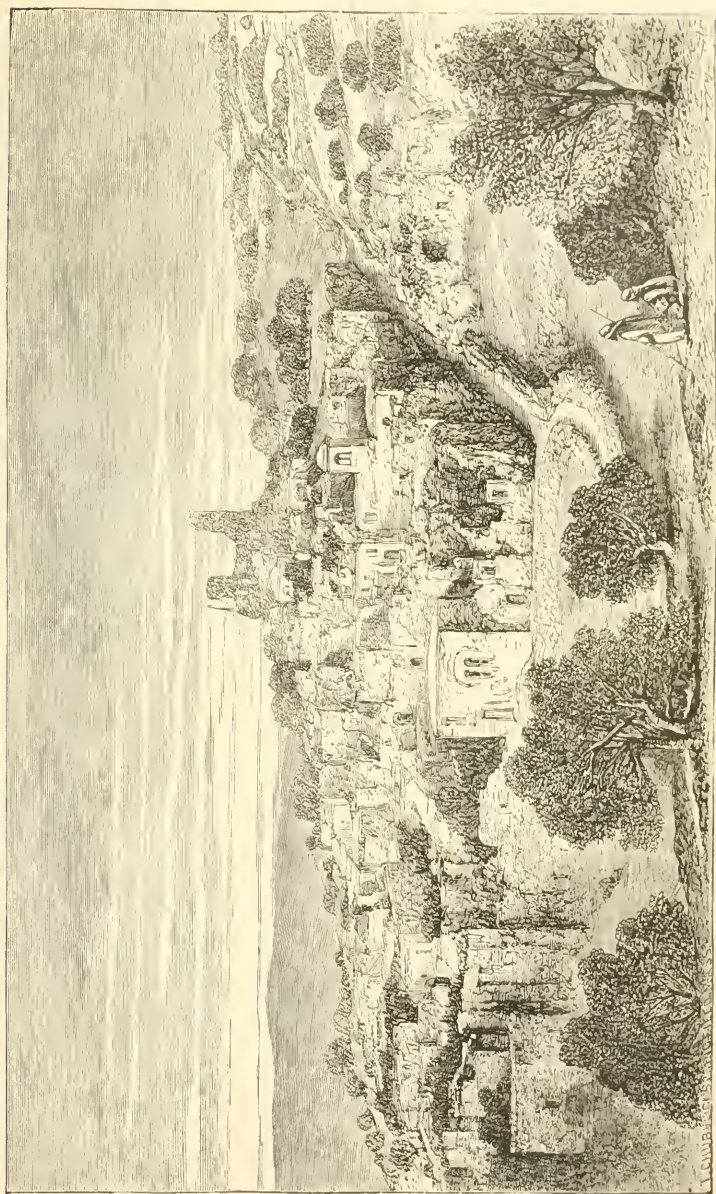
*Neander's "Life of Christ," page 348.

to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every one had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he saith unto him, Well, thou good servant ; because thou hast been faithful over a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin ; for I feared thee because thou art an austere man ; thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down and reaping that I did not sow ! Wherefore then gavest thou not my money into the bank, that, at my coming, I might have required mine own with usury ? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath TEN POUNDS !) For I say unto you, That unto every one that hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me."

Having spoken this parable, Jesus led the disciples up the steep, desert road towards Jerusalem.

PART IX.

Passion Week.



BETHANY FROM ROAD TO JERICHO.

CHAPTER I.

MARY ANOINTS JESUS AT THE HOUSE OF SIMON.

JOURNEY OF JESUS FROM JERICHO TO JERUSALEM—FEAST AT THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE LEPER—MARY ANOINTS HER LORD—INDIGNATION OF THE DISCIPLES—JESUS JUSTIFIES HER—SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANOINTING.

MARK XIV. 3-9. JOHN XII. 1-9.

THERE is no more sterile or desolate region in the Holy Land than that between Jericho and Jerusalem; it must always have presented the same dreary aspect as now; for it is utterly incapable of cultivation. Through this region, a steep, rocky path leads to the latter city, the ascent being for some fifteen miles, singularly toilsome and exhausting. Up this mountain road Jesus with His disciples is now slowly toiling, cheered by occasional glimpses of the Mount of Olives in the distance, and of a village, a little below, embowered in palm-trees, olive orchards, and pomegranates. To this village, looking even now, from a distance, "the perfection of retirement and repose,"* the way-worn and dusty company looked forward with hope and longing; it was BETHANY, the village of Martha and Mary, and Lazarus. At length, as is conjectured, on a Friday evening, Jesus reached the hospitable dwelling where He had spent so many hours in the society of those He loved; and who can doubt that He was received with demonstrations of reverence and

* Bonar, 139, 230, 310, 337.

joy? How wistfully, a few weeks before, had the two sisters looked down that gloomy road to the Jordan, watching for His coming? Then they were in deep affliction; for Lazarus was sick unto death. With what different emotions do they now welcome their Friend and Benefactor to their ever grateful home!

The next day the disciples at Bethany made our Lord a supper at the house of one Simon the leper,—a man who had probably been cleansed by Jesus of that horrible disease, so much dreaded in the East even to this day. How he was related to the family of Lazarus—whether he was as one ancient tradition says, his father; or according to another, the husband of Martha; or whether he was only an intimate friend—is unknown. At his house, however, the feast was spread, and Martha was among them that served.* As a friend and neighbor, if not as hostess, she lent her skillful and energetic assistance in waiting on the guests, and she was not now in the mood to complain of her younger sister for lack of coöperation. Much serving there is to be done, but it does not appear that Martha is any longer “cumbered” with it. In her own way she acceptably expresses her affection to her adored Master. Lazarus sat at the feast, an honored guest, but *silent*. He had known the dread secrets of hades by actual experience; but he held his peace:

“Behold a man raised up by Christ;
The rest remaineth unrevealed;
He told it not; or something sealed
The lips of that evangelist.”

It is very touching to think of Lazarus as sitting silent at that supper, with unutterable memories in his eyes.

* “It is very common in the East, that a person who is attached to you by a bond of affection or of domesticity should go to serve you when you go out to dine.” (Renan, *Life of Jesus*, page 314, note.)

Perhaps the secrets of the spiritual world can not be told in mortal speech.

There is another figure at this banquet, equally silent, but invested with a glory which can never grow dim. It is Mary, the sister of Lazarus. I picture her to myself as gazing alternately on her beloved brother and on Him whose voice had called him from the tomb. Heaven broods upon her face. Her eyes are "homes of silent prayer." She gazes with infinite adoration on the form of the Saviour, who is to her "God manifest in the flesh." Her dumb love, swelling like ocean tides till it overflows her whole being, struggles for expression. Guided by a prophetic instinct, she takes an alabaster vase of genuine spikenard,—a most precious ointment, used only by the rich, and by them only on extraordinary festive occasions. She first anoints the feet of Jesus, and then wringing off the neck of the vase she pours its contents on His head. Then prostrating herself before Him in an ecstasy of worship, she wipes His feet with her hair. The fragrance of the ointment filled the whole room.

While Mary was thus engaged there were those who looked on with no friendly eyes. Among the apostles themselves was one of a sordid, avaricious spirit, who had never had a glimpse of the true glory of Christ, or of the nature of His kingdom. This was Judas Iscariot. On account of his skill in worldly affairs he had been made the steward and treasurer of the little community, and carried the purse. He was already more than suspected of having embezzled the funds entrusted to his keeping; for the ruling passion of his heart was the love of money. He had therefore fallen in the day of temptation; but up to this time, so consummate had been his hypocrisy, that he had enjoyed the full confidence of most of his fellow-disciples, who probably regarded him as a man of prudence as well as piety. This man beheld the anointing

by Mary, with contracted brows. "Why," he muttered, "was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" The other disciples at once began to say among themselves, "Why was this waste of the ointment made? for it might have been sold for *more* than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor." In fact the estimate of Judas was low. The box of ointment, weighing a pound, must have cost more than fifty dollars according to our reckoning. It must be confessed that, viewing the affair as a mere matter of economy, Judas had some show of reason on his side. Assuming that Mary was rich,—and this, though possible, is scarcely probable,—does not her generosity seem extravagant? How much might have been done with three hundred pence? And then what good *was* done by the anointing? Would not the majority of modern Christians reason in the same way? Is there anything more shocking to them than the waste of money? Let us not judge the disciples too harshly for the censure which they pronounced on Mary at the instigation of Judas. He indeed was only enraged because the value of the ointment had not come into his bag; but his cunning suggestion that the poor were robbed by Mary's extravagance, struck them as reasonable.

Poor Mary! What must have been her emotions when she heard these comments on an act which she must have presumed, would, at such a moment, be understood by all the disciples. She had not once thought of expense; she had scarcely *thought* at all; what she had done was in a rapture of holy love; and now to be told that she had been guilty of sinful extravagance and of indifference to the wants of the poor,—this sorely perplexed and troubled her. But be of good cheer, Mary; though the servants can not understand you, the Master can and does. "When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why

trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

The prediction with which this eulogy closes is very extraordinary. It shows an absolute assurance in the mind of Jesus, not only that His religion would become universal, but that the minute incidents of His earthly life,—and this especially, *would be preserved in written records*; for in no other conceivable way could the fact be everywhere preserved and known.* Such an assurance, so boldly uttered, goes far towards proving His divine character and mission. The fulfillment of the promise is sufficiently apparent. This present history tells over again, in this western world, the story which has been told a thousand times before, and which will be told to successive generations till the end of time. Renan omits much, almost everything essential in the life of Jesus; but he was not permitted to omit this.†

Coming now to examine the grounds of this eulogy,—which is quite unparalleled among those which fell from the lips of our Lord,—it is obvious that Mary's act must be judged of in the light of her general character. Had the same thing been done by another person, in a spirit of ostentation, or for some selfish end, it would doubtless have been pronounced by Christ wholly sinful and unlovely. In *Mary* it was transcendently beautiful. It was the spontaneous act of adoring love. Now Christ regarded love to Himself—which was indeed but love to perfect goodness and absolute truth—as the one supreme

* Alford on Matthew xxvi. 13. † "Life of Jesus," pages 313-315.

virtue which reduced all faults coëxisting with it to zero. No matter how defective according to an exact legal standard a character might be, if marked by the predominance of this one element, He regarded it as just and good. In such a character He would see no sin—mark no fault. Mary may have had many defects, though she seems to have been singularly pure; but her love to Christ was probably unrivalled; it was a love too large, too adoring for words. Could she have expressed it in song, we should have had such a hymn as mortals never heard. But her affection was dumb: so she seized the alabaster vase, broke it, and poured the precious nard over the head and the feet of Him, who in her eyes was the “Brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His Person.” That was her hymn. Her love was like the ointment poured forth, rich, fragrant, precious. Love like Mary’s makes its own law. It sometimes sets at nought the maxims of worldly prudence, and disregards temporal utilities; but whatever it does is good and lovely. It gives what it has at hand most precious; it gives all, expecting no reward, and satisfied only with the full expression of its own divine intensity. If the perfume had been worth thirty thousand pence instead of three hundred, Mary would have poured it out on the head of the Redeemer, and her love would have justified the deed. None the less would it have been precious in the eyes of Christ, had it been worth but a penny. Still He would have pronounced it a “good work;” still He would have commended her, saying, “She hath done what she could.”

Mary’s exceeding love to Christ, inward and spiritual as it was, drew her nearer to Him in sympathy than most of the disciples. She understood the mission of Christ better than the apostles themselves: for while they were incapable, even to the last, of perceiving the necessity of His sufferings, she knew it so perfectly that she anointed

Him beforehand for His burial. She understood the significance of her own act. She felt the divine sorrow which He carried in His heart; she remembered what He had so often said touching His passion and death. She knew that His hour was at hand; that she was in truth anointing that holy body for the sepulchre. It was an act of surpassing love, of speechless sorrow, and not less of calm, prophetic, victorious faith. While she anointed Him for the tomb, she did homage to Him as her King, and joyfully anticipated His resurrection and glory. May we not reverently presume that the human heart of Jesus found consolation, during that awful week, in the knowledge that one other human heart felt the burden that was crushing His? And if the anointing was a token of this profound sympathy, is it wonderful that His undying praise immortalized the deed?

CHAPTER II.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO JERUSALEM.

ENTHUSIASM OF THE PEOPLE—ROUTE OF THE PROCESSION—PROGRESS FROM BETHANY DESCRIBED—CHRIST WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM—ENTERS THE TEMPLE—RETURNS TO BETHANY—THE BARREN FIG-TREE CURSED—SECOND PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

MATTHEW XXI. 1-19. MARK XI. 1-19. LUKE XIX. 24-44. JOHN XII. 12-19.

WHEN Jesus and His apostles turned aside on Friday, to spend the Sabbath with their friends in Bethany, the multitude who came up with them from Jericho went on to Jerusalem, which was only a half-hour distant. They carried the tidings to the city, already full of pilgrims, that Jesus had come up to attend the Passover, and that Lazarus, who had probably accompanied his Master to His retreat in Ephraim, had returned with Him. The news flew through the city and created in all classes intense excitement. The disciples were filled with joy and hope; for they expected the immediate coming of the kingdom of God. The priests and Pharisees,—all the enemies of Christ,—exulted, not without fear and misgiving; for though they were glad to have Him once more within their reach, and were resolved that He should not again escape them, they felt that they had reason to apprehend a popular uprising in His favor. His miracles, and especially the raising of Lazarus, the reality of which they could not deny, had convinced many of His divine mission,

and had kindled an almost national enthusiasm. It had indeed become a question whether Lazarus himself must not also be put out of the way. Probably much of the Sabbath was spent by the leading conspirators in anxious consultation. The strangers in the city heard with startled interest of the words and works of the Galilean Prophet, and many of them earnestly desired to see Him. The majority of the people were probably without any definite convictions, and were ready to yield themselves to any strong popular movement. The Roman authorities were, as usual, vigilant, but calm, and not predisposed to attach great importance to religious excitements among the Jews. They were indeed beginning to hold all religions in equal contempt.

Many of the Jews, when they heard that Jesus and Lazarus were in Bethany, went out to see them, some of the less rigid perhaps on the morning of the Sabbath; others at sunset. However this may be, Jesus seems to have spent that day in peaceful seclusion with the beloved family of Martha. He well knew what was before Him during that awful week. The time was come for Him to manifest Himself to His people as the promised King of Israel. His next entry into Jerusalem was to be with a pomp and majesty befitting His character and the nature of His kingdom. The manner and circumstances of this entry, though they came about naturally, none the less entered into the plan of Christ, and were ordered by the providence of God. He who knew what was in man foresaw that the enthusiasm of the multitude would spontaneously offer Him an ovation on the morrow,—an ovation that should fulfill the prophetic sign of His Messianic character. Zechariah had said, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of

an ass.”* The attempts of several well-meaning writers to show that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy half-unconsciously, are ill-judged and unnecessary. It seems clear that our Lord intended on this occasion to proclaim Himself, in the most public manner possible, the very King spoken of by the prophet. His own part in the procession, therefore, was predetermined. Whether one of His friends in the neighboring village of Bethphage had been directed to provide the ass on which the Lord was to ride into the Holy City, is not certain; but the language of the inspired narrative leads us rather to the conviction that no such arrangement had been made. The ass was providentially ready at the time when the “Lord had need of him.” There is no miracle in the case, unless our Lord’s *knowledge* be called miraculous. The entry probably did not take place till the afternoon of the day following the Sabbath—that is to say, on Sunday of Passion Week—just one week before His resurrection.

“Three pathways lead,—and probably always led,—from Bethany to Jerusalem; one, a steep footpath over the summit of Mount Olivet; another, by a long circuit over its northern shoulder, down the valley which parts it from Scopus; the third, the natural continuation of the road by which the mounted travelers always approach the city from Jericho, over the southern shoulder, between the summit which contains the Tombs of the Prophets, and that called the Mount of Offence. There can be no doubt that this last is the road of the Entry of Christ, not only because, as just stated, it is and must always have been the usual approach for horsemen, and for large caravans, but also because this is the only one of the three approaches which meets the requirements of the narrative which follows. This road soon loses sight of

*Zechariah ix. 9.

Bethany. It is now a rough but still broad and well-defined mountain track, winding over rock and loose stones, a steep declivity below, on the left; the sloping shoulder of Olivet above it on the right; fig-trees below and above, here and there growing out of the rocky soil."* Midway is an angle in the road, where a portion of the city first breaks on the view; thence the descent is steep and almost continuous to the valley of the Kedron.

Let us ascend the Mount of Olives above this angle to a point which commands a view of the whole winding road from Bethany to Jerusalem. Here we will take our stand and observe the events of the day. It is a little past noon. A hum from the city, as from a vast hive, just reaches our ears. We see its streets crowded with a motley multitude, looking at this distance like swarming bees. Caravans of pilgrims, some on horses, some on camels, many on foot, are passing through the gates. The hills around the city are thickly dotted with tents and booths; indeed, the extra-mural population seems to exceed that within the walls. Looking down into the deep valley of the Kedron, we are struck with an unusual movement of the multitude. A steady stream is flowing from the city into the gardens and groves at the foot of Olivet. Anon, men climb the palm-trees and cut down the green, feathery branches. The people below seize them as they fall, and bearing them aloft as banners, take the road to Bethany. They are evidently animated with a common purpose. Men, women and children, commingled in the glad procession, sweep up the rocky pathway.

Glancing now in the opposite direction we see the village of Bethany all alive. The house of Martha seems to be the center of a mighty mass of human beings. At length Jesus, followed by His apostles and personal friends,

* Stanley's Palestine, pages 187, 188.

Lazarus and Mary doubtless near Him, issues from the house and the multitude receive Him with reverent acclamations. The procession begins to move, while the people throng around the Saviour, many doubtless to thank Him for having cured them of grievous diseases. Men who had once been blind but now saw; lepers who had been cleansed; women who had been possessed of devils, but were now in their right minds; paralytics who now walked and leaped, praising God;—these are there to testify their gratitude. Reaching the confines of a little village, not far from Bethany, Jesus stops, and we see two disciples hastily pass into the village, till they come to a house where an ass, with a well grown foal, stands tied. They at once begin to loose the beast, and; after a moment's conference with the owners, lead it away to the place where Jesus stands. Having spread their garments as housings on the unbroken colt, they set Jesus thereon, and the procession again moves forward. The people, still thronging up the winding path from the city, meet the descending multitude; they greet the Saviour with shouts, cast down their palm branches in the way, even pluck off their cloaks and spread them upon the stones and dust; and so turning towards the city, some going before and others following, they move forward, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" The sound is like the noise of many waters; it rolls down the rocky ravine, and up the mountains, and seems to rend the sky. There are Pharisees among the crowd, not probably pronounced enemies of Christ, who are shocked by this ascription to Him of Messianic honors; and they call on Jesus to rebuke His disciples. In reply He points to the stones

and says: "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Again the procession advances, climbing a little ridge of Olivet which still veils the city, till it reaches a ledge of smooth rock. In an instant Jerusalem bursts into view. The temple, the spacious courts, the magnificent city on its broken hills, with its background of gardens and suburbs, stand out clear and distinct in the light of the declining sun.

Here Jesus pauses. Let us reverently raise our eyes to the face of the King in this hour of His triumph, when the glad acclamations of thousands are in His ears. His eyes are fixed mournfully on the city, and as He gazes, tears roll down His cheeks. Listen: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now are they hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Having uttered this prophetic lament, Jesus again advances, and the multitude shout hosannas as before. The procession passes through the open gate and the streets leading towards the temple. The whole city is thrown into commotion. Strangers inquire, "Who is this?" and the multitude reply: "This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth in Galilee." At length Jesus enters the temple courts. The King appears in His palace. His first acts disclose the nature of His dominion. The blind and the lame come to Him and He heals them. These miracles call forth fresh outbursts of joy from the people. Children take up the strain and cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" The chief priests and scribes are full of wrath, and say to Him: "Hearest Thou what these say?"

.. Yea," Jesus replies; "have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" The day being far spent, Jesus having surveyed the temple and marked the many evidences of sacrilegious desecration, returns to Bethany for the night.

He returned to Jerusalem the next morning, fasting. His abstinence was surely voluntary, and does not appear to have been shared by those who were with Him. Jesus, however, hungered. Seeing a fig-tree standing close to the highway, covered with leaves, He looked to find fruit concealed among its luxuriant foliage. Finding on examination that it bore "nothing but leaves," He said to it, "Let no fruit grow on thee hereafter forever." While the disciples looked upon it, it began to wither and die. This act forms no exception among the beneficent miracles of Christ. The object of this so-called malediction could feel no pain; no wrong was done the owner, for it was barren; while its death was made to preach a most solemn and impressive sermon to all generations, and especially to those then living. In truth the judgment on the fig-tree, with its consequent withering, is to be regarded as a parable and prophecy. The Jewish nation was a tree planted by God Himself in a fruitful soil. Age after age it had put forth leaves which promised abundant fruit. It professed the true religion; it maintained the worship of the true God; it cherished the hope of a coming Messiah; it seemed full of religious zeal; yet when the Divine Husbandman came seeking fruit, He found none. Therefore He doomed it to wither and die. Thus the sentence pronounced on Jerusalem and on the nation the day before is solemnly repeated, and in a form that the disciples could never forget.

We must not omit, in this connection, the important suggestion of Neander:—"To understand Christ's act aright, we must not conceive that He at once caused a

sound tree to wither. This would not be in harmony with the general aim of His miracles; nor would it correspond to the idea which He designed to set vividly before the disciples. A sound tree, suddenly destroyed, would certainly be no fitting type of the Jewish people. We must rather believe that the same cause which made the tree barren had already prepared the way for its destruction, and that Christ only hastened a crisis which had to come in the course of nature. In this view it would correspond precisely to the great event in the world's history which it was designed to prefigure: the moral character of the Jewish nation had long been fitting it for destruction; and the divine government of the world only brought on the crisis."*

It is also to be noted that the fig-tree was cursed not only for being fruitless but also and especially for being *false*. It gave signs of a vigorous life, and promised abundant fruit; but all was delusive. It was, therefore, a striking emblem of hypocrisy in the individual, the church, and the nation. "Nothing but leaves" is a terrible description of "those who profess that they know God, but in works deny Him."

Our Lord lingered not at the withering fig-tree; His work was before Him; this day He was to assert His authority over the temple and His zeal for the house of God. At the commencement of His ministry, He had purified the temple by driving out the buyers and sellers, the sheep and oxen, and by breaking up the market which had been established in the sacred courts. This was intended rather as a testimony against the sacrilege than as an effectual punishment; for as soon as Jesus had departed the practice seems to have been resumed. It was indeed an old abuse sanctioned by the rulers of the

*Life of Christ, page 358.

temple. It was fitting that Jesus, who had a few hours before suffered Himself to be greeted as the Son of David in those very courts, should now exert His royal power and authority by again purging the temple of those who profaned it with their noisy traffic. "And they come to Jerusalem; and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves."

For a little while Jesus was actual Lord of the temple. The same outflashing divinity which subdued His enemies on the former occasion was not wanting on this: He encountered no open resistance; even the rulers and scribes, though they were inwardly enraged, were restrained from opposition by the fear which fell upon them, and by the astonished enthusiasm with which He was regarded by the people. That He was to be put to death, however, they regarded as settled; and they held secret consultations touching the means to be employed. The history of the next few days will disclose their subtle policy as well as their malignant hatred. It was an essential part of their scheme to bring our Lord into discredit with the multitude; and to this end they resolved to ply Him with questions which, as they hoped, He would not be able to answer without alienating from Himself all classes of the people. Thus they sought to array against Him all sects and parties. This should be borne in mind by the reader of the following pages.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST AND THE PHARISEES.

THE POWER OF BELIEVING PRAYER—CONVERSATION WITH THE PHARISEES, SCRIBES AND CHIEF PRIESTS—PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS—PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN—PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

MARK XI. 20-33; XII. 1-13. MATTHEW XXI. 20-46. LUKE XX. 1-18.

JESUS again spent the night in Bethany, and returning the next morning by the same pathway to Jerusalem, the disciples observed with wonder that the fig-tree was withered and dead. When they called the attention of our Lord to the fact, He said to them: "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you your trespasses."

No more pregnant utterance ever fell from the lips of Jesus. It sets forth with extraordinary clearness the divine philosophy of miracles. They are only possible when the human will is joined by perfect trust to the

will of God It was thus that Jesus wrought Himself His mightiest miracles. While He commanded He prayed, as when He said, "Father, I know that thou hearest me always," and then cried, "Lazarus, come forth." The faith which removes mountains dwelt first in Jesus, and brought His human will into living conjunction with that Will which is essential omnipotence. Through the same faith His church was to acquire unlimited control over the forces of nature. This endowment belongs even now to the people of God, though they will only be fully conscious of it when regenerate man shall tread the "new earth," the crowned king of "the world to come." Then shall new and wondrous meaning be disclosed in the prophetic language of the eighth psalm: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." The "powers of that world to come" were wielded at will by the Second Adam, and they were imparted by Him to "the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," but those powers can not be arbitrarily employed at the caprice of individual believers. They are a sacred deposit to be drawn upon, in obedience to the immediate promptings of the Holy Spirit, for the advancement and glory of the kingdom of God.

Jesus taught His disciples that in order to keep themselves in communication with the source of all supernatural powers, they must "*have*" habitual, abiding faith in God; and as "prayer is the utterance of faith, and faith the soul of prayer," He speaks of them as inseparable. As prevailing prayer must be without wrath as well as doubting, He reminds the disciples of what He had formerly said in the Sermon on the Mount, that they could

only pray effectually when they prayed in a spirit of love towards their fellow-men. It would seem that there can not but be doubting in the heart of him who is angry and unforgiving. "Therefore," says the Saviour, "when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any." It is probable that when these words were spoken Jesus was near the city. When He said, "ye shall say to this mountain, be thou removed," He doubtless pointed to Mount Moriah on which stood the temple. The removal of that mountain would be in effect the overthrow of the Jewish Theocracy; the vanishing away of that dispensation. We can not but think that the saying has this far-reaching meaning. Jesus intended to assure His disciples that all obstacles should disappear before the word of faith, even false religions, apostate churches, powerful hierarchies, and hostile governments.*

Having uttered these memorable sayings, our Lord passed into the temple. Hardly had He entered when the chief priests, elders, and scribes, approached Him in a body, and said, "By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?" They had evidently been in consultation, and in pursuance of their plan to draw from Him some declaration which would at once alienate the people and offer ground for a formal accusation against Him, they resolved to question Him in public. Their first inquiry was intentionally vague. The phrase "*these things*," could mean anything or nothing, as they might afterwards find convenient. It might include all His miracles and teachings since the commencement of His ministry, or it might be limited to the events of the last few days. By entering the city as a King, and accepting the homage and hosannas of the people, and especially by exercising for a day supreme

* Hebrews xi. especially 32-40.

authority in the temple, Jesus had seemed to set Himself up as the Messiah; but He had not, in so many words, announced His character and claims. His enemies hoped that the time had come, when His reticence would cease and He would boldly say, "I AM THE CHRIST." In that case their course was plain; the whole matter might at once be brought before the Sanhedrim. But they were short-sighted with all their cunning. They fell into the trap which they had prepared for Him. They forgot that He also could ask questions.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John—was it from heaven or of men? Answer me." This was a turn which they had not expected. They well understood that John was still regarded as a true prophet by the whole nation; probably they themselves had received his baptism; and in different circumstances they would not have hesitated to avow their belief in his prophetic mission; but to do it then and there would have entangled them in a hopeless dilemma. They knew that John had borne explicit testimony to Jesus as the Messiah, and that the next question would be, "Why did ye not believe Him?" On the other hand, if they denied the divine origin of John's baptism they dreaded an outbreak of the multitude, who without exception "counted John, that He was a prophet indeed." In this dilemma, after a brief consultation among themselves, they beat a hasty retreat, saying, "we can not tell." And Jesus answering, said unto them, neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Then He added the most transparent of all His parables: "But what think ye! A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented and went. And he came to

the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go sir; and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto Him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye when ye had seen it, repented not afterward that ye might believe him."

Thus our Lord charges home upon them their hypocrisy, and shows that their hostility to Himself was without excuse. Even the most immoral and infamous classes had shown more spiritual discernment and more facility in believing, than those who sat in Moses' seat. He plainly tells them that the first son represented the publicans and harlots; and the second, who professed his readiness to obey his father, represented themselves. The rage of His enemies must have been intense; but conscious that they were playing a desperate game, and knowing that the sympathy of the multitude was as yet with Jesus, they kept silence. Bound to the spot as by a spell, they listened sullenly to another parable:

"There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants more than the first, and they did unto them likewise. But last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to those husbandmen? They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

Doubtless the priests and Pharisees saw the drift of this parable, but they affected unconsciousness. This was in effect to pronounce a terrible judgment on themselves, which Jesus immediately applies:—"Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder." Thus, then, it became clear, that the vineyard was the kingdom of God; that the wicked husbandmen were the Jews, especially the chief priests, elders, and rulers; that the servants of the owner were the prophets; and that Jesus Himself, whose murder they were at that moment plotting, was the Son. The conclusion was inevitable that the kingdom of God should be taken from them and given to others. By these parables, so lucid, so obvious, yet so terrible in their application, the enemies of Jesus were stung to the quick. They would at once have laid hands upon Him, but for fear of the people. For the moment they were silenced, and Jesus proceeded to utter another parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. And he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have pre-

pared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid unto the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

The kingdom of God is here represented under the figure of a marriage feast given by the King (God) to His Son (Christ). The guests first invited are the Jewish people, to whom John the Baptist, the twelve apostles, and the seventy, proclaimed the near approach of the kingdom of God. The servants sent forth at supper time to announce to the invited guests, that the oxen and fatlings were killed and all things were ready, represent the disciples who, after the death and resurrection of Christ, preached remission of sins in His name, beginning at Jerusalem. The persons who first accepted the invitation and then declined the feast, even maltreating and murdering the servants, represent, of course, the covenant peo-

ple, whose destruction is clearly set forth by the sending forth of the king's armies to punish the murderers and burn their city. The gathering in of chance guests, not included in the first invitation, signifies the calling of the Gentiles. The wedding garment, freely provided, as the parable implies, for all,—is, of course, the righteousness of faith, without which none, whether Jew or Gentile, shall sit down to the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb.” Thus again Jesus declares the transference of the kingdom of God from the Jews to the Gentiles. The parable is mainly prophetic, though it incidentally sets forth the fulness and freeness of redemption, and the supreme blessedness and glory of those who accept the offer of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ. Those who are now in the visible church waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the marriage supper which shall inaugurate His glorious kingdom, ought to see to it that they have on the wedding garment, even *that linen clean and white which is the righteousness of saints.*

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST AND HIS ENEMIES IN THE TEMPLE.

INSIDIOUS QUESTION OF THE SADDUCEES TOUCHING THE RESURRECTION—
CHRIST'S ANSWER.

MATTHEW XXII. 15-33. MARK XII. 13-27. LUKE XX. 26-40.

JESUS is still in the temple, surrounded by His disciples and by an immense multitude. The chief priests and elders, the scribes and Pharisees, who had so confidently approached Him when He came into the temple, are confounded and crest-fallen; for their ensnaring questions have been swept away like spiders' webs, or have served only to entangle themselves. They retire temporarily from the contest, that they may take secret counsel together, probably in the Stone Chamber of the Sanhedrim. Baffled but full of rage, they resolve not to give over the policy which they have adopted; namely, to draw from Jesus some utterance which would compromise Him with the Roman authorities, or with the people. They determine to keep themselves in the background, lest their presence should put Him on His guard. They therefore select a number of tools from among their disciples and from a party, more political than religious, called the Herodians. This sect, if it was indeed a sect, seems to have been composed of partisans of the Herodian family. They were undoubtedly Jews who sustained the Herodian rule as the main pillar of Jewish nationality, and were willing to submit to domestic tyranny rather

than succumb to Roman power and greed. In so far as they were opposed to heathen rule, they were allied to the Pharisees; but as partisans of Herod, they must have looked with satisfaction on such a compromise between the Hebrew faith and the Roman civilization as the princes of that house endeavored to maintain. Thus they had strong affinities with the Sadducees. Such was the party the leaders of which were now called into the conclave of Pharisaic conspirators. It was decided to propose to Jesus a question having a double aspect, being in fact both religious and political.

Having received their instructions, the chosen questioners came to Jesus in the character of sincere inquirers, who were sorely perplexed by a pressing case of conscience: "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for Thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?" It was indeed a perilous question. Should He say, *No*,—which was the answer they expected and wished for,—then the Herodians would be witnesses against Him, while the Pharisees would be ready as "impartial, honest" people to sustain their testimony. Should He say, *Yes*,—then He would compromise Himself with the people, who longed to throw off the Roman yoke. How the hypocritical interrogators must have quailed under the searching glance of Him who needeth not that any should tell Him what is in man! They get their answer—all too soon: "Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money. They brought Him a penny (denarius). Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then said He unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's."

There is in these words, as Stier has remarked, a box within a box, a meaning within a meaning. The answer of Christ is not evasive, as some have thought, but it is at once direct and far-reaching. Two kinds of coin were in circulation among the Jews; the imperial money stamped with the effigies of Cæsar, and the sacred temple-money bearing another stamp. When Christ called for the tribute-money, they brought Him a denarius, which bore the image of the reigning emperor, Tiberius. The circulation of that particular coin was a proof that the Roman authority was extended over the Jewish nation; that Cæsar had certain dues which the people ought to concede; in a word, that tribute ought to be cheerfully yielded. But on the other hand the temple-tax must also be cheerfully paid; for that was a tribute to God. Doubtless the penny represented much more than Cæsar's right to tribute; it was a proof of his authority in a certain sphere, limited by the paramount authority of God. Jesus therefore declares that obedience to God and to Cæsar are not incompatible, but sustains the authority of both. The limit of Cæsar's authority is not indeed defined, but it is implied that the law of God, interpreted by conscience, is in all doubtful cases an infallible guide. That which the conscience affirms as due to God must not be given to Cæsar. In this view we quote with pleasure the comment of Renan:—"By this expression—'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's'—Jesus has created something beyond politics, a refuge for souls in the midst of the empire of brutal force. . . . The power of the state was limited to earth, the soul was enfranchised, or at least the terrible fascies of Roman omnipotence were broken forever."

When Jesus referred to the image of Cæsar on the denarius as an evidence that it belonged to him, it is plainly implied that whatever bears the image of God belongs

likewise to Him. The penny to Cæsar: the soul to God! We can easily believe that the questioners, when they heard this answer marvelled and held their peace. Jesus was victorious. They were conscious that their subtle scheme had miscarried: that their malice had been detected and exposed.

All the Jewish parties were in turn to be confounded by the calm wisdom and Divine authority of the Master. Soon after the Herodians had retired, the Sadducees came to Him with what they regarded as a problem insoluble except on their own materialistic principles. This aristocratic sect, glorying in its high culture, its wealth, and its freedom from superstition, had hitherto stood aloof from Jesus, whom they probably regarded as a Galilean enthusiast. They were of an epicurean temper, and eager to enjoy the good things of this world. Denying the doctrine of a future life, they professed to practice virtue for its own sake; but their moral standard seems to have been low, and their religion a dry formalism. They had long had a monopoly of the highest dignities of the hierarchy, and they looked with indolent contempt on all deep, spiritual movements among the people. As they did not actively persecute our Lord during the greater portion of His ministry, they escaped the severe denunciations which He pronounced against the Pharisees.

The time had come, however, when this sect was to be roused from its lethargy. Jesus had entered the city and the temple as a King. He had exercised authority over the temple itself. The enthusiasm of the people was setting strongly in His favor, and it naturally struck the shrewd, worldly leaders of the sect, that nothing could prevent a revolution except the taking off of the Galilean Prophet. They therefore entered, perhaps reluctantly, into the conspiracy against Jesus. Their first appearance on the stage was not creditable to their worldly wisdom.

They hoped to confound our Lord with their clumsy dialectics. Attributing to Him certain gross fancies concerning the mode of existence and the social relations of saints after the resurrection, they hoped to perplex and silence Him by the following childish problem: "Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed to his brother. Now, there were with us seven brethren; and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased; and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her."

It is very noticeable that our Lord treats these Sadducees with extreme gentleness. Far from denouncing them as hypocrites, He charges them only with error: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." They thought themselves well versed in the Scriptures, especially in the writings of Moses; but they were now told that they had never penetrated beneath the "letter which killeth." They felt sure that the doctrine of the resurrection was not contained in the Pentateuch; and they therefore rejected it; for they attached no authority to the oral law, and only a general, secondary authority to the prophets. Jesus reproves them for their blindness to the inner meaning of the Scriptures. *That* was the cause of their error. We may remark in passing that all Sadducean errors of later times may be clearly traced to a similar ignorance of the Word of God. Our Lord continues: "The children of this world marry and are given in marriage; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrec-

tion." While Jesus does not deny an eternal distinction of sex—which, for aught that appears, may exist even among the angels—He denies such a relation between the sexes as is the very condition of human existence in this world. That relation implies mortality; for in a world without death the law of reproduction will not prevail. In that world *there will be no marriage*. Thus the difficult problem of the Sadducees melts into air. It involved a gross misconception of society among glorified saints.

Having thus corrected the error of His interrogators, Jesus proceeds to prove that the doctrine of the resurrection was contained "even" in Moses, whose divine legation and inspiration they acknowledged:—"And as touching the dead that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush, God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but the God of the living; ye do therefore greatly err." The argument turns on the relation between a living, personal God and the patriarchs as living persons. God had conversed with Abraham as friend with friend; He had entered into covenant with him; He had declared Himself Abraham's God. Long after the death of Abraham, and of Isaac and Jacob, with whom the same covenant had been renewed, God still called Himself their God. "If they no longer lived, if they were annihilated as the Sadducees fancied, then the appeal to the promise which had been given to them, far from being confirmatory of the faith of Moses and of Israel, was rather a bitter irony on the part of God against Himself: 'I who have not delivered even those from death!' If the words 'I am their God' are to be understood in any way worthy of God, then must the fathers still exist as *persons*, as their *names* indicate, inasmuch as HE thus speaks of them. The ever-living One must otherwise be truly

ashamed to be called a God of beings who existed only for a short space of time.”* “He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

It may strike some readers that the argument of Christ proves the continued and endless existence of *the soul*, but has no bearing on the resurrection of *the body*. It may relieve the minds of such readers to consider that the resurrection, as set forth in the New Testament, always implies that the subject, though dead, is still in some sense living. Thus our Saviour in John v. 28, speaks of *the persons* who shall be raised at the last day as previously existing: “The hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth.” So also the famous illustration of the apostle Paul in I. Corinthians, xv. 35–38, implies that the life of the saints who shall be raised in incorruption and glory shall never be suspended: “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed its own body.” The *life of the germ*—what may be called the soul of the plant—is not destroyed by the decay of its *body*—the kernel of grain to which it belongs—else its development in a new form, its resurrection, would be impossible. So, if the souls of the righteous were annihilated at death, if no living germ survived the dissolution of the body, there could be no resurrection of the same persons. On the other hand, the continued though imperfect and fragmentary life of the departed is a sure pledge of their future resurrection, just as the life of a decaying seed, is a promise of its speedy germination and reproduction in

* Stier, volume 3, page 172.

a new body. "The living God gives by His own power, life to His own; but Abraham's soul is not the entire Abraham, and without body Abraham is not entirely living."* While therefore the words of Jesus prove beyond cavil the reality of a separate state intermediate between death and the resurrection, they also imply that souls in that state, though they live unto God, are under a certain disability and limitation which will cease when as "the children of God," they shall rise from the dead, clothed in bodies like unto Christ's glorious body. The present state of the holy dead is blessed and peaceful; they sleep in Jesus; and they are conscious of His presence; but they without us can not be made perfect. They wait in earnest expectation, for the manifestation of the sons of God, or in other words, for the redemption of their bodies.

The Sadducees, when they heard this answer of Jesus, had nothing to say in reply; but some of the scribes who were present, hearing this triumphant vindication of their doctrine, forgot for the moment their hostility and exclaimed, "Master, *Thou hast well said!*"

* Steir, volume 3, page 173.

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST AND HIS ENEMIES—CONTINUED.

JESUS STILL IN THE TEMPLE—THE PHARISEES AGAIN IN COUNCIL—A LAWYER IS PUT FORTH TO QUESTION JESUS—THE ANSWER OF CHRIST—JESUS QUESTIONS THE PHARISEES CONCERNING THE SON OF DAVID—TERRIBLE DENUNCIATIONS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES—THE WIDOW'S MITE—CERTAIN GREEKS SEEK AN INTERVIEW WITH JESUS.

MATTHEW XXII. 34-46. MARK XII. 28-44. LUKE XX. 41-47. MATTHEW XXIII. 1-39. LUKE XXIII. 1-4.
JOHN XII. 20-36.

THE PHARISEES seem to have been still in council when the intelligence was brought them that the Sadducees had also been put to silence. They probably heard this with mingled exultation and disappointment. They certainly did not regret that what they regarded as a fundamental error, had been publicly refuted from the Scriptures; but they must have felt uneasy that in this "war of words," Jesus had hitherto overcome all His assailants and put them to shame in the presence of the multitude. Their main purpose had been completely thwarted; for they had not elicited from Him a single utterance tending to bring Him into discredit with the people, or furnishing ground for a judicial procedure against Him. What was next to be done? The answer of Jesus to the Sadducees had contained an exposition of an important passage in the Pentateuch, so new and profound, that even the scribes had been surprised and delighted. The Pharisees seem to have thought, however, that Jesus, an unlearned Galilean,

must have stumbled by chance on His interpretation, and that if He were further questioned He would not fail to betray His ignorance. They therefore put forward a certain scribe, distinguished for his profound knowledge of the law and therefore called *a lawyer*, to test our Lord's knowledge and insight. This lawyer answered their purpose all the better because he was wise, tolerant and candid—a sincere seeker after truth. They probably left the form and even the matter of the questioning to him.

He, having heard the answer which silenced the Sadducees, brought forward a question of great importance, then much agitated among the doctors of the law—a question in which he personally felt a deep interest, and on which he hoped Jesus would cast some light: “Which is the first commandment of all?” Jesus answered, “Hear, O, Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely, this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; there is none other commandment greater than these.” Considering that this lawyer was a Pharisee, his ready and cordial assent to the answer of Christ, and his voluntary declaration that love to God and man was “more than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices,” is remarkable. Jesus Himself regarded him with special interest and said to him, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” “And in this He intended no more and no less than the words conveyed. Had He considered an earnest moral striving, such as this man expressed, to be sufficient, He would have acknowledged him as not only *near* but *in* the kingdom of God. He tells him, however, that he is on the way to it, because he was freed from the Pharisaic delusion of the righteousness of works, and knew the nature of genuine piety;

and could therefore be more readily convinced of what he still lacked of the *spirit* of the law which he so well understood. The conscious need of redemption, thus awakened, would lead him to the only source whence his wants could be supplied.”*

While this conversation between Christ and the lawyer was going on, the Pharisees, having left their conclave, were gathered round the speakers. Jesus seized the opportunity to propose a question *to them*, not surely for the purpose of embarrassing them, but rather of suggesting to the people a higher view of the person of the Messiah than they had yet entertained:—“What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?” The answer was, of course, such as He anticipated: “The Son of David.” Every intelligent Jew knew that the Messiah was to be of the lineage of the prophet-king, and was to be born at Bethlehem, the ancient seat of the family; but the most enlightened of the nation had yet to learn His divine and eternal generation. To lead them on to this more difficult yet vital conception, Jesus appeals to David himself: “How then doth David in spirit call Him LORD, saying, the LORD said unto MY LORD, Sit Thou on my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him LORD, how is He his Son?”

This question, which none attempted to answer, is *the* question of ages. The wisest and most enlightened Christians, during eighteen hundred years, have studied it almost without intermission; but they have not yet fathomed the “abysmal depths” of Christ’s personality or the mystery of His incarnation. That He is both the Son of David and the Son of God in one person forever, is confessed by the church catholic in all her creeds; but how it can be, is a deep which no plummet of human reason

* Neander’s “Life of Christ,” page 363.

has ever sounded. The question as asked by our Lord, evinces a full consciousness of His Divine Sonship. He, standing there among His enemies, knew that He was GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH; and the calm wisdom with which He intimated rather than declared the mighty secret which He carried in His heart, was altogether god-like. Well did He know that His hearers were not prepared to receive it; but it was His purpose to awaken their minds to the great problem. It would seem that the multitude showed special pleasure at this stage of our Lord's discourse, for Mark tells us that "the common people heard Him gladly." But His enemies were speechless with mortification and rage. We picture them as eyeing Him askance, from under lowering brows, while furtive gestures betrayed their deadly hate. The contest of words was now over and they were fully resolved on more desperate measures. They felt that it was a death-struggle; Jesus Himself knew that His hour was close at hand. And He did not shrink from the crisis.

It was at this time that He delivered the most terrible of His discourses—that in which He painted in such awful colors the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, and pronounced upon them a seven-fold woe. Their pride, ambition, covetousness, love of applause, and sanctimoniousness; their long robes, long prayers, broad phylacteries, and ostentatious tithing of mint, anise and cummin, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; their rapacity in devouring widows' houses, which they attempted to veil under the profession of extraordinary sanctity; their proselytizing zeal and their ferocious bigotry, their rigid formalism and their hidden wickedness—all the abominations of this unbelieving, recreant and God-forsaken sect,—were declared in language, plain, direct and terrible, which must have fallen on their ears like the thun-

ders of the judgment day:—"Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore, ye be witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then, the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold I send you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the porch and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Thus Jesus pronounced judgment on the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and rulers, the city and nation, and even on the temple itself. It was an awful voice—a voice of seven thunders; but it was broken with sobs of infinite pity. "O, Jerusalem! Jerusalem!"—what a lament was that! Though Jesus in these words bade farewell to the temple, He did not immediately leave it. "He no more hurried away from the temple now than He subsequently hurried away from the grave when He awoke to

new life. There He first placed the grave-clothes in order, and laid them on one side quietly; and here He sat down for a little time in the forecourt of the women, opposite the boxes for offerings which belonged to the temple treasury.* Here He saw the people casting in their offerings. The rich—from all parts of the Holy Land, from distant countries—made large oblations. Few Jews in that age were niggardly towards the house of God. Among the multitude a female in widow's weeds glided up to the treasury and cast in two mites. Little did she know whose eyes were upon her. But Jesus "called unto Him His disciples, and said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God; but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." This commendation implies that the widow had not only given more than the others in proportion to her ability; but that her oblation was more precious because it proceeded from a heart full of love and faith. She offered to God her little ALL, and HERSELF. Let us hope that she heard the gracious words of Christ, and went to her lowly home with a heart relieved of every burden, cheered and comforted.

Another incident, narrated by "that disciple whom Jesus loved," may well have taken place at this time. Among the thousands of strangers who thronged the courts of the temple during this Passover week, were not a few of Gentile blood, who had either joined themselves to the covenant people by submitting to circumcision, or embraced the Jewish religion without renouncing their nationality. These last were called *proselytes of the gate*; and many of them were devout worshippers of the true God, who

* Lange's "Life of Christ," volume 4, page 97.

frequented the synagogues abroad, and sometimes presented themselves with their offerings at the temple in Jerusalem. Some of this class were present during this exciting week. Whether they had heard of Jesus previous to their coming we know not; but what they now witnessed excited not only curiosity but a deeper interest. They were Greeks, and had probably been led to embrace Judaism because of their dissatisfaction with the moral emptiness and impurity of their own religion. There was, however, an element in that religion which, in a certain degree, qualified them to understand the truth of the incarnation. It assumed that the gods were like men, only more grand and beautiful; and that men were made in the likeness of gods. Nay; it asserted that gods had become men and left on the earth a divine-human progeny; and that men had become gods. The Greek divinities were represented by statues in which humanity was idealized and invested with divine loveliness. With this image and prophecy of the incarnation the Greek religion stopped. That God was to be manifest in the flesh, a Greek who had embraced monotheism would more readily believe than a Jew; but that the incarnate God would redeem the world through suffering and death was quite alien to the Hellenic mind. The reader will bear this in mind, while considering this important incident.

These Greeks, desiring to see Jesus, requested Philip of Bethsaida,—perhaps, because he spoke their language, possibly because they had previously known him, certainly because he was in the confidence of Jesus,—to bring about an interview. Why Philip should have thought it necessary to consult *Andrew* does not appear. Probably they doubted whether such a public conference with Gentiles would be agreeable to their Master. However, they brought the request of the strangers to Jesus, and we can scarcely doubt that it was granted. He comprehended

the full significance of this event. The Gentile world approached Him, in fitting representatives, at the very crisis of His ministry; and this was a token that that world would, at no distant day, be white unto the harvest. That harvest, however, could not be matured and gathered in till *the seed* from which it was to grow should fall into the earth and *die*. The life of the world was to spring out of death. If the fulness of the Gentiles was almost ready to be offered, then His sufferings and death were just at hand. Hence this was a moment not only of solemn joy, but also of mental distress and anguish. "The life of God in Him did not exclude the uprising of human feelings, in view of the sufferings that lay before Him, but only kept them in their proper limits. Not by *un-humanizing* Himself, but by subordinating the human to the Divine was He to realize the ideal of pure human virtue; He was to be a perfect example for men, even in the struggles of human weakness."*

Probably it was when the Greeks were introduced, that Jesus said, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man shall serve Me, him will My Father honor. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? *Father, save me from this hour?* But for this cause came I unto this hour. FATHER, GLORIFY THY NAME!" Scarcely had Jesus uttered this prayer, when a voice fell from heaven, which, audible to all, conveyed to some an articulate response: "I HAVE BOTH GLORI-

* Neander's "Life of Christ," page 376.

FIED IT, AND WILL GLORIFY IT AGAIN." Twice before had the same voice attested the Divine Sonship of Jesus, once at Bethabara, and once on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was fitting that the same voice should be heard in the temple, at the moment of our Lord's departure. Some who heard the sound, without distinguishing the words, said that it thundered; others recognizing articulate speech but not apprehending the sense, said that an angel spoke to Him. Others, by a supernatural influence, were enabled to understand both the words and the sense.* Jesus Himself explained its design in solemn and memorable words, the last He ever uttered in the temple:—"This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me. (This He said, signifying what death He should die.) The people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest Thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light."

Our Lord does not answer the question of the people; for that question originated in a misconception which only His death and resurrection could remove. But He looked upon them with sadness and pity, and gave them wholesome counsel and warning. "Do not *now* ask captious and ill-timed questions; but improve the last beams of

*I regard the miracle as twofold—an external phenomenon, and the internal or subjective interpretation of that phenomenon. See Neander and Lange *in loco*.

the declining sun to find the way in which you ought to walk. The night is at hand: woe to the traveler who idles away the few golden moments which yet remain. I am the Light; do not cavil but believe; so you shall not walk in darkness in the night which is soon to fall upon you." Probably Jesus alluded to the fact that the natural day was now far spent, and the shadows of the evening were at hand. So the day of His earthly life and of His ministry was about to close; the Light of the world was, in a certain sense, about to set! A dark, dark night was already casting its gloom over the temple, the city, the nation, the world. Thus Jesus departed from the temple, never to return. The holy and beautiful house was left desolate.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROPHETIC DISCOURSE.

JESUS LEAVES THE TEMPLE—SURVEYS ITS STONES AND STRUCTURES—
PREDICTS THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE, THE CITY, AND
THE THEOCRACY—THE END OF THE WORLD—DISCOURSE ON THE
MOUNT OF OLIVES.

MATTHEW XXIV-XXV. MARK XIII. LUKE XXI. 5-36.

WHEN JESUS was leaving the temple the disciples, having in mind His prophecy (Luke xix. 43, 44, Matthew xxiii. 38, 39,) touching the utter destruction of the city and desolation of the temple, called His attention to the immense stones, of the whitest marble, of which the sacred structures were built, and to the votive gifts with which they were adorned. The temple proper, surrounded with its courts, cloisters and out-buildings, was the admiration even of those who had seen the architectural glories of Rome and Athens. Some of the stones were forty-five cubits long, five high and six broad. To the disciples, the temple seemed built for eternity. Its total demolition was inconceivable. "Master," said one, "See what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" "Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

The disciples must have heard these words with amazement. Such a destruction of the temple, as they well knew, would involve the ruin of the city, the nation, the

theocracy—in a word—the whole existing order of things under the old covenant. Nay, they evidently understood this prophecy as pointing to the destruction of the world itself. Sadly, therefore, they followed their Master over the brook Kedron, and up the steep ascent of Olivet. When they approached the point where the temple and the city could be surveyed to the best advantage, Jesus turned aside and sat down on the mountain. The holy and beautiful house lay just opposite, its marble walls and glittering roof kindled into flame by the setting sun. Doubtless He gazed with mournful tenderness on His Father's house and on the city of the great King, doomed to a destruction so fearful. There prophets and kings had lived, desiring to see His day, but had died without seeing it. There the blood of many saints had been shed; and there He Himself was about to be condemned and crucified. The end was come; His baptism was about to be accomplished; but He gazed on the city where His enemies were at that moment plotting His murder, with pity and sorrow.

While He was thus sitting, four of His disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, came to Him *privately*,—their fellow-disciples having probably continued their walk to Bethany. “Tell us,” they said, “when shall these things be? And what shall be the signs of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Let us endeavor to occupy their stand-point; to enter into their circle of ideas; to comprehend their views concerning the kingdom of God, and the coming of the Lord as related to that kingdom, to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the end of the world. It is evident that their ideas were confused, and their expectations vague. They saw that according to the Prophet Zechariah, awful judgments on Jerusalem were to be poured out at the time of the Messiah's personal appearing to set up His kingdom; but they knew nothing

of a dispensation to intervene between the destruction of the temple and His coming. They naturally looked for the glory in close connection with the judgment. They did not understand the death and resurrection of Jesus; but expected His personal manifestation—His glorious appearing,—without His dying. They therefore asked *when* the judgment should be executed, and what precursors of His glorious coming would be given.

Our Lord, in His reply, as His way ever was, gave to His discourse an eminently practical character. He sought to guard them against the temptations and perils to which they would be exposed, rather than to satisfy their curiosity by mapping out the future with chronological precision. And there were many things at that time, when the Spirit was not yet given, concerning which He could not speak to them plainly; the great scheme of the divine purposes they were as yet unable to comprehend. He Himself foresaw the speedy overthrow of that dispensation, and the approach of another, at the close of which His coming in power and glory should take place. He knew, too, that the Jewish dispensation was typical of the Christian, and that the events preceding the overthrow of the former, would foreshow what should come to pass in the last days of the latter. Our Lord therefore constructed His discourse on the principle of spiritual perspective, by which all prophetic utterances have a largeness of meaning, reaching beyond the foreground into the distance of the remote future. Lord Bacon's principle of a "springing and germinant fulfillment" is especially applicable to this discourse. Jesus undoubtedly spoke of *the events of that time*—otherwise He gave no answer to the questions of the disciples; but His words also swept all the ages, down to the consummation of all things. While, in the earlier part of the discourse, the ending of the Jewish dispensation is especially

prominent, the words employed are, on the principle just stated, applicable also to the ending of the Christian age.

He begins by warning the disciples against spiritual seducers who would come in His name, saying, I am Christ. He tells them that before the end, they would witness fearful agitations of nature, such as earthquakes in divers places; that dreadful sufferings would result from famines and pestilences; that there would be great commotions in human society, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and that desolating wars would sweep over the earth; that there would be bloody persecutions, marked by apostasy, treachery, and cruel massacres; that lawlessness would abound, and that in consequence the love of many would grow cold; and that all this would be but the beginning of sorrows. He speaks of long-continued trials and judgments; but He warns them that the end is not yet. All these things would *precede* His coming; all these things would be *tokens of the approaching end of the world*. It ought to be noted, that thus far our Lord has only specified such calamities and judgments as have marked the history of the world in every age and in all lands. He has spoken of those phenomena of nature, and those manifestations of human depravity, which are *in themselves* indications of the instability of the present order of things, and therefore signs of the end of the world. This part of the discourse corresponds to the travail and groaning of the creation, and to the shaking of the heavens and earth spoken of by the apostle Paul as signs of the new birth of the universe, and the establishment of an indestructible kingdom.*

Our Lord now goes on to speak of the judgments which should come on Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.

* Romans viii. 18-25; Hebrews xii. 26-28.

These He places among the precursors of His coming; though He nowhere intimates that He would come *at the time* of the destruction which He foretells in such graphic and impressive language. What the prophet Daniel had foretold, the standing of the abomination of desolation in the Holy Place, and the encompassing of the city with camps and armies, should be a warning to the disciples to flee to the mountains. This flight was to be made in the greatest haste, to escape the most terrible affliction which ever had been, or should ever be. The third time, and with still greater urgency, does the Lord warn His people against false christs and false prophets, who should work great signs and wonders to draw men into the wilderness, or into the secret chambers, to find Him. Against these snares and perils He gives them this safeguard, that the coming of the Son of man would be as lightning which cometh from the east and shineth unto the west. It will be no secret coming to a place on the earth to which men may retire, but quick, sudden, unannounced,—flashing in its brightness from one end of heaven to the other. He says to the disciples, in effect, Give no heed to those who tell you that I have already come secretly; for you will have no need of any message to apprise you of My advent. You will rejoin Me by no process of earthly journeying; for as the eagles fly from far to the carcass, so you will be caught away from the earth to meet Me at My coming. He did not say when this should be, but He set forth the manner of His advent, to guard them against deceivers pretending that Christ had already come.

This brings us down to Matthew xxiv. 29: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened,” etc. Turning to Luke, we find several additional particulars given, which throw great light on the order of events: “For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by

the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And *then* shall there be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars," etc.* Here it is distinctly declared that the "tribulation of those days" should continue during the dispersion of the Jews, and the desecration of the Holy City by Gentile feet. The "times of the Gentiles"—the Gentile-Christian dispensation—must be accomplished previous to the coming of the Son of man. Between the twenty-ninth verse of Matthew xxiv. and the preceding part of the chapter, there comes in *the present prophetic period*, marked by the rejection of the Jews and the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. Jesus had already (verse 14,) declared that before His advent, the gospel should be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations.

The word rendered "*immediately*" (*quickly*,)† bridges over the chasm between the endings of the two dispensations. *Soon after* the great tribulation, certain signs shall be seen in heaven. Such expressions must be understood in a large sense, according to the usage of prophecy. In a later part of this very discourse our Lord declares that the time of His coming was unknown, not only to men and angels, but also to the Son Himself; and He distinctly intimates, in a series of parables, that there would be what men would regard as a long delay. Yet He spoke of His coming as always *near*, as *at hand*, as *at the door*; and He commanded His disciples to watch for it, as an event always imminent. "Surely, I come *quickly*," was the last word of the ascended Lord to His church,—a word spoken at the close of the Apocalypse which had disclosed a long series of events to precede His advent.

Luke xxi. 23-25.

† Matthew xxiv. 29.

This word "*immediately*," expresses, therefore, a prophetic consciousness of time, in which remote events are realized as close at hand, or really present; but they are not intended to set up an exact chronological standard. The *signs* specified are those which shall be seen before the judgment on the christian apostasy as described in the Apocalypse, at the opening of the sixth seal. They will probably be both physical and spiritual; spiritual first, as addressed to a spiritual people, able to discern the signs of the times; afterwards physical, to strike the senses of the world. *The sign of the Son of man*, which will be seen in heaven, just as the Lord Himself is about to appear, is probably that cloud of glory in which He will come, and into which He will gather His risen and glorified saints. This glory in mid-heaven will be awful and appalling to the nations. Then shall the judgment angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Thus our Lord has sketched, in prophetic style, the whole period from the time of His crucifixion to that of His second coming. He has set forth the signs of His appearing, but He has not answered the question, when these things should be. For aught the disciples knew from His words, He might come in a few years, or a few centuries. Returning now to their question, (Matthew xxiv. 32-36,) He does indeed give them a note of time, but rather to the spiritual sense than to the intellect: "Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye see all THESE THINGS, know that IT is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all THESE THINGS be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the

angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." These words are perplexing only to those who do not really read them. As the swelling buds and opening leaves of the fig-tree were *a sign* that summer was *near*, (not already come,) so the events which our Lord had foretold as the precursors of His coming, were to be a sign that *IT* (His coming) WAS NEAR. Those events therefore did not include His coming; but when the disciples saw "THESE THINGS" they were to look for "IT." Lest, however, they should understand Him as speaking with chronological precision, He adds that the exact time was known only to the Father. When Jesus said that that generation should not pass away till all those things should be fulfilled, He did not say that His coming should take place within the life-time of that generation, but that the signs of it should appear. He did not say that the summer should come, but that the fig-tree should bud. No doubt the budding of the fig-tree should be speedily followed by the summer; but as there is sometimes an anomalous season, in which the untimely frosts of spring long retard the summer, so the advent of the Lord and His reign—the glorious summer of the universe,—may be delayed by the unbelief or apostasy of the visible church. The Bridegroom can not come till the Bride shall have made herself ready.

What that generation saw was *the signs* of the Lord's coming. Every cycle of those signs—agitations of material nature, disturbances and overturnings in human society, the persecution of the saints, the appearance of false christs and false prophets, the destruction of the Holy City, of the temple, and of the Jewish nationality, the great tribulation in its first terrible blows—all was fulfilled ere some who heard the prophecy passed off the stage. But they did not see the whole course of the Gentile dispensation, and the events attending its winding up.

They did not see the sign of the Son of man in heaven; they did not see Him coming in power and glory.

Our Lord next charges the disciples to be watchful. He tells them that His advent would come upon the world as suddenly as the flood in the time of Noah. "As a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."* Next follows a solemn admonition to the rulers of the church. While the servant who puts far off his Lord's coming, and is therefore a spiritual tyrant, or a self-indulgent reveler, shall be fearfully punished, the faithful and wise servant shall be set over all his Master's inheritance.

Having thus spoken of the judgment on the rulers, Jesus proceeds to speak of *the church as a body*. The difference between the wise and foolish was not that some were genuine Christians and the others hypocrites; but that the wise had received a full supply of the Holy Spirit, while the foolish had not sought such a supply, thinking that they needed only the grace necessary for a religious life. They had oil in their lamps, but no oil in their vessels for their lamps; so that when the demand arose for *an extra quantity* they were destitute. The parable implies that over and above the operations of the Spirit in the production of faith and a righteous life, there was need of special grace to prepare them for the Lord's coming. "Go ye to them that sell and buy for yourselves." They were not forever excluded from the kingdom of God, but their lack of instant preparation subjected them to temporary sorrow and shame.

Next follows the parable of the Talents, which teaches the right use of spiritual gifts, and the sin of neglecting

* Luke xxi. 25, 26.

to improve them. Our Lord having thus shown the judgment on the church and its rulers, at His coming, goes on to speak of *His judgment on the nations*. The parable of the sheep and goats, (a parable only in the imagery of the opening sentences,) sets forth the principles on which God will judge the nations that shall be alive at His coming. This premillennial judgment, however, in accordance with the law of prophetic perspective already alluded to, is spoken of as the type of the final judgment of all mankind, when the wicked shall be sent away into everlasting punishment and the righteous rewarded with life eternal.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONSPIRATORS AND THE TRAITOR.

FEELING OF JEWISH LEADERS—ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS—SECRET MEETING
OF THE SANHEDRIM—JUDAS ISCARIOT—HE COVENANTS TO BETRAY
JESUS.

MATTHEW XXVI. 1-5; 14-16. MARK XIV. 1-3; 10, 11. LUKE XXII. 1-6.

AFTER JESUS left the temple and went to the Mount of Olives, His enemies, wrought up to the highest pitch of rage by His terrible rebukes, felt the need of immediate action. During the last few weeks a series of events had occurred which left them no alternative but to concede the claims of Jesus or put Him out of the way. The raising of Lazarus had been followed by the public proclamation of our Lord as the Christ; by His triumphal entry into the city amidst the shouts of the people and the hosannas of the children; by His expulsion of the buyers and sellers from the sacred courts of the temple; and by those thunder-claps of denunciation which fell upon their ears like the voice of doom. They felt that the power of the hierarchy, if not its very existence, was menaced. Perhaps, too, there were those among them who, while comparatively indifferent to religious questions, were anxious touching the relations of the nation to the Romans. Such persons might view the great religious movement of which Jesus was the head, with genuine alarm. He was widely proclaimed as *a king*, and though He declared that His kingdom was spiritual, perhaps

they distrusted His sincerity; they certainly knew the tendency of every such movement to social and civil revolution; and, in any case, they had no reason to believe that their Roman masters would be careful to discriminate between a purely spiritual kingship and one that threatened political convulsion and war.

There were living, at that time, a few men of eminent political sagacity, belonging to the highest rank, who made it their chief study to secure the favor of the Romans, without exposing themselves to the hatred of their own countrymen. They had a difficult game to play, and for many years they played it with extraordinary skill and success. Two men of this description become conspicuous figures in this part of our history; Annas, or Ananus, and his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest of whom we have already spoken. The former, who was the son of one Seth, had more than twenty years before been appointed high priest by Quirinus, the imperial governor of Syria; but after holding the office some seven years, was removed by Valerius Gratus, procurator of Judea, to make room for a certain Ishmael, who after a short period was succeeded by Simon the son of Annas. After a brief administration, Simon gave place to his brother-in-law, Caiaphas, who was elevated to the high priesthood about A. D. 25., not long before our Lord entered on His public ministry. Annas, during all these changes, seems to have retained the title of High Priest, and with the title the substance of the power belonging to the office. He was a man of great force of character, and a shrewd, experienced politician. It was his interest to keep things as they were, to prevent popular agitations, and to avoid whatever might give offense or ground of suspicion to the Romans. He had probably kept aloof from Jesus until now, perhaps regarding Him as a harmless Galilean enthusiast whose career

would soon terminate of itself; but now he thought the time had come for him to interfere. It was a rare opportunity to show his fidelity to his Roman masters, and at the same time to gratify the blood-thirsty fanaticism of the Pharisees, who were determined that Jesus should die. Caiaphas seems to have been the crafty and zealous tool of his father-in-law, and stood ready to execute all his plans. Annas, more than any other man, was master of the situation.

When our Lord left the temple, as has been narrated, and went to the Mount of Olives, the members of the Sanhedrim, of which Caiaphas was president, were summoned to an extraordinary conclave, not in the council-chamber, on the temple-mount, but at the palace of Caiaphas. Where this was situated is by no means certain. Tradition locates it on the Mount of Offense, a little south-east of the city, where the ruins of the house of Caiaphas are still shown. The tradition can not be traced to early times; but it is a curious fact that the tomb of Annas has been discovered in the same neighborhood. While it is unquestionable that the high priest had a palace in Jerusalem, it is not unlikely that he had a country house within easy distance, where he usually resided. Such a house would be especially eligible as a place for secret consultation. For the purpose of gaining a vivid impression of what took place at this meeting we may well assume that tradition, on this particular point, has not erred.

Let us picture to ourselves the events of this memorable evening. Soon after Jesus left the temple and crossed the brook Kedron, the members of the Sanhedrim, one after another, passed out of the same gate, but soon turned from the road up the Mount of Olives to the right, and ascended a hill which lay further to the south—a hill then covered with villas and gardens, now with ruins. Jesus therefore sat on the Mount of Olives at the same time

that His enemies were plotting His death on the neighboring eminence. How to accomplish their purpose without creating a tumult among the people was the problem. Jerusalem was full of people who had come up to attend the feast; and among the multitude were many of Christ's own disciples from Galilee. To arrest Him in public would endanger the peace of the city, and thus offend the Roman authorities. The essential condition of success in their horrible conspiracy was, that the blow should be secret and sudden, that Jesus should be seized while in seclusion, and if possible in the night, and that His death should follow swiftly on His condemnation. The Pass-over was at hand; only one more day would elapse before the feast; it seemed on many accounts undesirable that He should be put to death on the great day of the feast; and there scarcely seemed to be time to bring it about sooner. They had not reached any definite conclusion when their conference was interrupted by a most unlooked-for arrival.

Judas Iscariot had become gradually alienated from Jesus; and he had been more conscious than ever, since the anointing at the house of Simon, that Jesus thoroughly understood his character. What his views were when he first became a disciple is doubtful. It is difficult to believe that he was at that time hostile to Jesus. It is on the other hand probable that, having witnessed our Lord's miracles, he really believed in His Messiahship; and that, for a considerable period, he confidently expected to see Him ascend the throne of David. But his views of the kingdom of Christ were carnal and worldly; and as the character and aims of Christ became more clearly developed, as the spiritual nature of His reign became more and more pronounced, and as the breach between Him and the visible theocracy became wider and wider, Judas, disappointed and perplexed, grew disaffected towards his

Master. When at length it became clear that Jesus read the secrets of his heart, that He had detected his master-passion, avarice, and more than suspected him of the shameful sin of theft; he was filled with shame and fear, which speedily passed into hatred. His dark, ferocious nature, impelled him to seek revenge. He became possessed with one terrible idea, that Jesus must die. He was hurried along by a sort of demoniac fury. The voice of conscience was drowned; his heart was turned to stone; all remembrance of the mighty works and gracious words and innocent life of his Master was, for the moment, obliterated; and he abandoned himself to the satanic influence by which he was swept away. But even in the tempest of his rage, his ruling passion asserted its power. Determined as he was to betray the Lord, he resolved, if possible, to sell his treason for money.

Judas had kept his eye on the enemies of Jesus; he had watched their movements, and by force of sympathy had penetrated their designs. He knew that the crisis was at hand; and it is not unlikely that he had seen the members of the Sanhedrim, singly or in groups, on their way to the house of Caiaphas. We conjecture that after Jesus and the four disciples turned off from the road to Bethany to ascend the Mount of Olives. Judas, detaching himself from the other apostles, turned to the right and ascended the Mount of Offense. Presenting himself at the door of the High Priest's house, he was admitted. His appearance, when it was known that he was an apostle of the Nazarene, doubtless made a sensation. But when he said to them, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?"—they were filled with glad surprise. As his demands were moderate, there was but little haggling about the price. "They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PASSOVER.

THE PREPARATION—THE SUPPER.

MATTHEW XXVI. 17-35. MARK XIV. 12-31. LUKE XXII. 7-38. JOHN XIII. 1-38.

WE have brought down the history of our Lord to the close of the third day (Tuesday) of Passion Week. At the close of His discourse on the Mount of Olives, He probably retired to the house of His friends in Bethany. The next day, Wednesday, seems to have been spent in seclusion. The inspired record has drawn a veil over that day which we shall not attempt to raise. On Thursday the disciples asked Him where they should prepare the Passover feast. On the afternoon of that day, "between the evenings," that is to say, from an hour or two before sunset till dark, the paschal lamb was to be killed; and as yet, it seems, the Master had given no order touching the place, or the needful preparation. Now, however, He directed Peter and John to go into the city, instructing them when they should meet a man bearing a pitcher of water, to follow him to his house, and say, "The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?" It seems probable that Jesus had intimated His purpose to one of His disciples in Jerusalem—Joseph of Arimathea, perhaps, or Nicodemus—to celebrate the feast at his house; but His directions to the two disciples evince a supernatural prevision, like that displayed in the preparations, a few days before, for His triumphal entry. Peter and

John found everything as was predicted; and they made ready the Passover.

In order that we may understand the events of this memorable evening, it is requisite that the design of the Passover feast, and the mode of its celebration, should be briefly explained. The institution of the Passover is recorded in Exodus xii. The Israelites were ready to leave the land of their long and bitter bondage. The Egyptians had been appalled and crushed by a terrible series of judgments, now about to culminate in the simultaneous destruction of their first-born. On the tenth of the month Abib, every Hebrew householder was to select a lamb, or a kid, without spot or blemish, and on the fourteenth, at evening, the animal was to be slain. The blood was to be sprinkled, with hyssop, on the door-posts, as a sign to the destroying angel that the household was under divine protection. The lamb was to be roasted whole, care being taken not to break a bone. It was then to be eaten by the people standing, with girded loins, with shoes on their feet and staves in their hands. The bread was to be unleavened, and was to be eaten with bitter herbs.

While the substance of this festival was perpetuated, the mode of celebrating it was afterwards considerably modified. The use of hyssop, the sprinkling of the door-posts with blood, the standing posture, the girding of the loins, the staves, etc., were omitted; and the following mode of observance was ordained:—On the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, every house was to be purged of every vestige of leaven. Every male, not ceremonially unclean, was to appear before the Lord at the national sanctuary, and present an offering of money in proportion to his ability. As the sun was setting the lamb was to be slain, and the blood and fat given to the priests. The lamb was then to be roasted whole, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. No

portion was to be left till the morning; but the bones and tendons were to be utterly consumed with fire. The same night, the fat was to be burned by the priest and the blood sprinkled on the altar. It was ordained that the next day,—or as the Jews reckoned time, the *same* day, after the night was passed,—there should be a holy convocation, signalized by special sacrifices, and more joyous festivities. It was on this day that the harvest was consecrated by the waving of the first sheaf before the Lord. In process of time the entire week became one great Passover feast, and was popularly so called.

In the time of Christ the above order was substantially observed. The lamb, having been slain at the temple, was roasted whole; the unleavened bread and bitter herbs were placed on the table, around which the company sat or reclined, the master of the household taking the place of honor. All things being in readiness, THE FIRST CUP OF WINE was filled and a blessing was asked on the feast. The bitter herbs were then eaten, and the unleavened bread was handed round. Then the SECOND CUP was filled, and the head of the family, in response to a prescribed question,* explained the meaning of the feast, gave an account of the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt and of their deliverance, with a particular explanation of Deuteronomy xxvi. 5. The first part of the Hallel (Psalms cxiii., cxiv.) having been sung, the lamb was placed on the table, carved and eaten. Then followed the THIRD CUP OF WINE, and soon after THE FOURTH. The feast was then concluded by singing the second part of the Hallel, (Psalms cxv. to cxviii.)†

The significance of the Passover, as a type, is most important. It carried a twofold aspect;—it was both sad and

* Exodus xii. 26.

† This account of the Passover is condensed from the learned article in Smith's Bible Dictionary.

joyous; it bore the reminiscence of a fearful doom and of a gracious deliverance. The judgment on the first-born in Egypt was pronounced on Israelites as well as Egyptians; all were alike exposed to the destroying angel; all were accounted guilty and none could claim exemption on the ground of *justice*. In mercy God provided that every Hebrew householder might offer a lamb, as a sin-offering, in lieu of the first-born under sentence of death. The blood of the innocent victims, sprinkled on the door-posts, should make atonement, and be accepted as a substitute for the life of the son and heir. The destroying angel, seeing the blood, should pass over the household. The lamb thus sacrificed was to be roasted and eaten; thus the feast was a feast upon a sacrifice—a covenant feast—a feast of reconciliation and thanksgiving.

The paschal lamb has been regarded by the church in every age as a striking type of Christ. “Christ our Passover,” says the apostle, “is sacrificed for us.” He, the Lamb of God, was offered to avert the doom which rested on the human family. His blood, sprinkled on man’s habitation, the earth, turned away the messenger of divine wrath, and arrested the destruction of the race. The Passover feast thus pointed forward to the atoning sacrifice of the cross, now about to be consummated. Doubtless Jesus Himself had been distinctly conscious of the meaning of the feast. Year after year, He had eaten the paschal victim with His disciples, knowing that He was celebrating His own approaching death. And now His last Passover had come. One more day and the feast would lose all significance; and, as a divine ordinance, be superseded by another, which, through all ages, would point back to the great sacrifice of which this was a prophetic type. In this view, this particular Passover is invested with touching interest and grandeur.

It was probably not yet six o’clock when Jesus, with

His apostles, entered the guest-chamber where the feast had been prepared. When the hour was come He sat down with them. His words, as He took His place at the board, were such as they could never forget; they smite upon our hearts with divine power and pathos:—"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you I will not any more eat thereof, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Long had he been straitened by His divine longing,—I had almost said, impatience,—for the baptism of blood; and now, knowing that it was to come upon Him ere the close of this Passover day, and looking beyond the cross and the sepulchre, to the kingdom of God, He expressed His satisfaction at the fulfillment of His intense desire. Then He took the cup,—the first Passover cup,—and not drinking of it Himself, after He had given thanks, He said: "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." No earthly refreshment for Him at such a moment as this! The shadow of a dreadful woe is upon His soul; but that shadow hides not from His view the joy that is set before Him. He will, in that kingdom which He contemplates as near, even at the doors, drink the new wine with His people. What that wine will be can not now be known; the wine of immortality, the wine of heaven, the feast of redeemed immortals, the marriage supper of the Lamb, will only be understood by those who sit down to the banquet. The antepast cheered the soul of the Redeemer on the eve of His passion.

One would think that such words from the lips of Jesus, would have stilled, if not extinguished, all selfish passions in the hearts of the apostles. It is unutterably mournful to read that at this moment a strife broke out among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. It was a

question which had often before caused unseemly contention; and now it probably arose while they were taking their places at the table. They strove, perhaps, for the places of honor, near the Lord's person. There may have been another cause of strife. It was probably customary among the Jews, either just before or immediately after the first cup, for a servant to wash the feet of the guests—perhaps also their hands.* On this occasion no servant was present to perform the ablution, which, if for no ceremonial reason, may have been necessary after their walk; and none of the disciples were ready, in the spirit of self-sacrifice, to render the needful service. Jesus, grieved at their selfish pride, takes occasion to set forth the lowly spirit of His kingdom in contrast with the spirit of the world: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom as My Father hath appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Having said this Jesus proceeded to exemplify its spirit, in a manner equally touching and sublime. While supper *was commencing*,† He rose from the table, laid aside His outer garment, girded Himself with a towel, and then, pouring water into a basin, began to wash the disciples' feet. All conjectures in respect to the order of this foot washing

* This is not certain; but see Lange's "Life of Christ," vol. 4, pp. 158, 159.

† So John xiii. 2, ought to be rendered.

are vain. He *may* have commenced with Peter; the narrative, however, does not say so, but rather suggests the contrary. Jesus no doubt pursued the order best calculated to subdue that passion for precedence which had gained possession of their hearts.

When the turn of Peter came, he was overwhelmed with shame, almost with indignation, that his Lord, whom not long before he had confessed as the Christ, the Son of the living God, should perform this menial office for him and his fellow apostles. When Jesus approached him he drew back in a kind of horror: "Lord, dost THOU wash MY feet?" "What I do," Jesus replied, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Peter, or rather *Simon*, carried away by what he mistook for reverent humility, broke forth in language of generous but wilful affection—an affection that savored of this world rather than of God: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus repressed this unseemly outburst of false humility that erected itself against the will of Christ, by words which were severe in sound but carried an appeal to the true, adoring love which lay at the bottom of Peter's heart: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." It is enough: the very thought of being separated from Christ sweeps away all his ill-timed shame and reluctance. "Lord," he exclaims, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." In recoiling from the abyss which he saw opening under his feet, Peter has rushed to the opposite extreme. If washing be necessary to continued fellowship with Christ, he will not only submit to it, but offer his hands and his head. "Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all." As if He had said, "This foot-washing denotes not a total cleansing, but presupposes it. It is the partial ablution needed by one who, after bathing, has walked in

the dust and mire: you have been washed in the laver of regeneration, and you therefore only need to be purified from such defilement as regenerate persons contract from day to day, by reason of their natural corruption." Thus Jesus passes from the natural to the spiritual—from physical purification to moral. "This foot-washing represented to them, besides its lesson of humility and brotherly love, their daily need of cleansing from daily pollution, even after their spiritual regeneration, at the hands of their Divine Master."*

Our Lord having completed His lowly service, resumed His garments and again reclined at the table. "Know ye," He said, "what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture might be fulfilled,† He that eateth bread with Me, hath lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it comes, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me."

Again and again does Jesus give expression to a great sorrow which is weighing on His heart. "Ye are not all clean." "I know whom I have chosen; he who eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me." Now He tells them plainly, "Verily, verily, I say unto

* Alford on John xiii. 10.

† Psalms xli. 9.

you that one of you shall betray Me." Alas, a dark shadow is on the feast; its fellowship was marred, first, by the contention among the disciples, and now by the presence of a traitor. The apostles, John excepted, have no suspicion that any of their number has already become a secret enemy of the Lord; they regard this as a prediction of the future apostasy of some member of the society. But they are none the less appalled and overwhelmed with sorrow by the announcement. Their love to Jesus is sincere and intense, though their bearing towards one another is sometimes selfish and unfraternal. Their thoughts take a humble as well as practical direction. Each one thinks within himself, "Am I a dog, to do this thing? Am I capable of such incredible wickedness? I can not tell what I may be left to do." And so they begin to say aloud, "Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?" The question runs round the circle; but Jesus does not answer.

Peter beckoned to John, who was lying in his Master's bosom, to ask Him directly who should be the traitor. "Lord," said the beloved disciple, "who is it?" Jesus answered, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it." Then he uttered those awful words, "The Son of man indeed goeth as it is written of Him, but woe to the man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born." The sign was understood by some; it must have been understood by Judas himself. He saw that his treason was known to Jesus; he knew that he was about to be pointed out; but he reached forward and took the sop, even while the hand of Jesus was in the dish, saying, half in desperation, half in defiance, "Lord, is it I?" Jesus answered quietly, and in an under-tone, "Thou hast said,"—or, *Yes, it is thou.* Oh, had Judas refused the sop, fallen down at Jesus' feet and confessed his sin, all would have been forgiven. But when he received the sop, he

finally closed the contract with Satan, who from that moment gained entire possession of him. He retained his consciousness of freedom, and so was not a demoniac, but he was henceforth like an arrow shot from Satan's bow. So when Jesus said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly,"—words spoken rapidly, and still in an under-tone, Judas arose and immediately went out. He had much to do; and he worked with energy at his fearful task. He had to make arrangements with the rulers for the fulfillment of his bargain. In the confusion of the moment, the majority of the apostles did not understand what was passing. The sudden departure of Judas, they supposed had reference to some further provision to be made for the feast, or to the distribution of alms to the poor. Had they suspected that he was going to raise a band of men to seize their Lord, those two swords which they had among them would not have slept in their scabbards. Peter, prompt and fiery, would not have let the traitor escape.

But he is gone, and with his departure the black shadow which had come over the feast has vanished. Jesus, conscious now that He is surrounded with sincere though timid friends, gives unreserved expression to the mingled joy and sorrow which were swelling in His heart: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straitway glorify Him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me, and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye can not come, so now I say to you, A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another."

Peter broke in on the discourse, at this point, with the question, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" Our Lord's answer was prompted by tender reserve, for how could they

bear *the whole truth* touching His death and entrance into the mysterious realm of hades? "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterward." Peter, without any full understanding of this prophetic utterance, answered in the conscious sincerity of His heart, "Lord, why can not I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Jesus, addressing Himself to all the apostles, said, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Bold words, which the rash apostle afterwards remembered with shame and sorrow. "Simon, Simon," said the Lord, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Peter still protested his readiness to accompany his Master even to prison and to death. How little he knew of his own heart! Jesus knew *all* that lay unconscious in that heart: "Verily, I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." Peter refused to be convinced; with the vehemence of a hurt spirit, he still persisted in declaring his willingness to die with his adored Master. He spoke as he felt; but he spoke in ignorance of his infirmities. Had he owned it as possible, at that moment, that he would deny Christ, we should have loved him less. How much he was *like one of us!*

It is often overlooked that Peter was addressed, as in some degree representing his brethren. The words, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," were spoken to all the apostles. They joined him, not only in his vehement protestations, but in his cowardly

flight when Jesus was arrested. They did *not* with him enter the palace of the High Priest, following Jesus afar off. His courage lasted longer than theirs. Even in the garden, he attempted to defend our Lord with the sword, but was overruled. Peter was not a coward; he was a weak, sinful man, and an immature Christian; "for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."* After the day of Pentecost, who so brave as Peter? At this time he and his fellow-apostles were trusting in their own strength. They had even had thoughts of defending their Master and themselves against any sudden assault of their enemies. Jesus would lead them to see the vanity of self-help at this crisis: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it; and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned with the transgressors; for the things concerning Me have an end." You will now need to make thorough provision for your own safety; for I am about to be taken from you. You will have need of treasure and of means of defense; for you will have a world in arms against you. That He was speaking figuratively they ought to have known; for how could they purchase swords at that hour of the Passover night? They, however, as usual, understood Him in the literal sense; "Lord, behold, here are two swords." We can not but picture to ourselves the look of pain with which He replied, "It is enough." Enough, and more than enough, of carnal weapons. Enough, and more than enough, of their stolid misconception of His words.

* John vii. 39.

CHAPTER IX.

LORD'S SUPPER: VALEDICTORY DISCOURSE.

MATTHEW XXVI. 26-29. MARK XIV. 22-25. LUKE XXII. 19, 20. I. CORINTHIANS XI. 23-25.
JOHN XIV. XV. XVI. XVII.

ACCORDING to the harmonistic scheme which we have adopted, the Passover feast was now well advanced. The first and second cups of wine had been drunk; the unleavened bread and bitter herbs had been eaten; the farewell morsel of the lamb had been received; and the time had almost come for the third cup and the singing of the Hallel. At this stage of the meal its character was suddenly changed: the old covenant passover became, by the act of Christ, a new covenant sacrament. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins; this do ye, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of Me. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

That we may enter into the significance of the Holy Communion, thus instituted, we must carefully consider the act and the words of Jesus. The ACT lay in His taking the bread, which was, of course, unleavened, into

His hands, and, after giving thanks, breaking it and giving it to the disciples. After the same manner He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to the disciples. That He wrought any substantial change in the bread and wine, is not contradicted by the record; but neither is it declared. For aught that appears, the bread and the wine were still bread and wine after He had blessed them. What He intended *to do* can be best inferred from what He *said*. The words of thanksgiving or blessing which He uttered are not recorded. Had they been extraordinary,—had they revealed any mystery connected with the new sacrament, they would assuredly have been given to the church. What, then, was the meaning of His words, when He presented the bread and the wine to His disciples? He tells them that the bread was His body—His body “given” and “broken” for them. By His body He doubtless meant His living body, then and there visible to them; but soon to be offered as a sacrifice for their sins. Indeed, He speaks of it as already offered—as already given up and broken. So His blood is spoken of as already shed for the remission of sins. He represents Himself as a perpetual sin-offering—the one, eternal paschal Lamb. But in what sense was the bread His body, and the wine His blood?

What meaning did the apostles themselves probably attach to the words? Is it credible that they understood Him as asserting that the bread and wine which He held in His hands were at that moment, by a stupendous miracle, changed into the very substance of His body and blood? Is it probable that such an idea was even faintly suggested to their minds? It was an idea so new, so extraordinary, so contradicted by their senses, that if it had but dawned upon them, they would not have failed to question Him further. Accustomed, however, as they were, to commemorative and symbolical rites, they would easily understand the bread and wine as *signifying* His

body about to be offered and His blood about to be shed for their redemption. "This bread which I now break, is, for you, My body; and this wine, which I divide among you, is, for you, My blood. I give you, by these tokens, the fulness of My life. When, after My death, you do this in remembrance of Me, be assured that I shall then be with you, as truly as I am with you now. This sacrament shall be the sign and pledge of My presence in the power and grace of My risen and glorified humanity; in eating the bread and drinking the wine, you shall have real communion in My body and blood." So much the apostles must have understood, either at the time, or after the resurrection of our Lord. It does not appear that they held or taught any doctrine more definite than this.

After the apostolic age, the fathers spoke of the eucharist in terms of the most profound reverence; but they did not assert the scholastic, middle-age doctrine of transubstantiation. They held that the sacrament was designed to unite the partakers wholly with Christ,—to change itself in them, according to His working, into His body and blood. The development from this germ of the tremendous dogma of transubstantiation, is a striking comment on the words of the apostle, "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?" This dogma demands no extended notice, much less refutation, in the present work. Since the Reformation three theories of the Lord's Supper have prevailed among Protestants, each of which has a large element of truth:

First, it has been held by many that the Lord's Supper is simply a commemoration of the historic Christ, especially of His sufferings and death. According to this view, the bread and wine are mere emblems to remind the partaker of the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord. His presence in the sacrament is in no sense

special or peculiar; He is, indeed, present only to thought and feeling, and not at all by any operation of His glorified humanity, or energy proceeding from it. He is present only as His sufferings and death are realized by Christian faith and feeling. It is even said by some that the communicant *finds* in the sacrament what he *brings* to it; no more, no less. The positive part of this view, is, so far as it goes, both true and important. The Lord's Supper was doubtless intended to be a commemorative feast; and the consecrated bread and wine are true memorials of His body and blood. This is not denied by any, but is an essential part of every doctrine of the Eucharist. But does this exhaust the meaning of the sacrament? Is there not some sense in which the ever-living Redeemer *gives Himself to His people* when He says, Take, eat; this is My body; this is My blood; drink ye all of it? "The bread which we break," says the apostle, "is the communion of the body of Christ; the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ." Is there, then, no *real* communion in the body and blood of the Lord? Is the Supper a make-believe feast on the sacrificed Lamb of God? We believe that there is more, infinitely more, in the Lord's Supper than the Zwinglian view admits. The Christian consciousness of these later days is powerfully reacting against the scarcely disguised rationalism which strips all Christian sacraments of life and reality, and turns them into mere Judaic ceremonies. That reaction, if we read aright the signs of the times, is destined to make itself widely and deeply felt hereafter.

Secondly, the doctrine of the Reformed Church, has, in the main, been that of Calvin, who, while asserting that our Lord intended the supper to be a feast of commemoration, strenuously insisted that He Himself, in His real body and blood is received therein, by faith. According

to this doctrine, the glorified Saviour is really present, not in the bread and wine which remain unchanged, but *under the outward signs*; that is to say, in the sacrament as a whole, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Christ can be received only by faith; He gives Himself only to the believer, but to him He gives Himself wholly. This doctrine of the real presence, fully answers the demand of a sound exegesis and meets the yearnings of the Christian heart. When our Lord says: "Take, eat; this is My body," there is a large and glorious meaning in the words if they assure the communicant of the gift of the fulness of His divine-human life. In this view the wondrous discourse in the sixth chapter of John's gospel, is luminous and sublime; while the lower view makes it mystical and extravagant.

Thirdly, the Lutheran doctrine, which differs little from what is called the Anglican, asserts the real presence of the Lord in the material elements by way of mysterious union with their substance. We can not see how this view harmonizes any better with the words of Christ than the one just presented; and it is logically less tenable. By contending for such a physical change in the bread and wine as is implied in their substantial union with the body and blood of Christ, it concedes a necessity for such a principle of interpretation, as leaves it no ground to stand upon as against Romanism. The Anglican doctrine, however, leaves us a real sacrament, and not an empty rite. While it tends to superstition, it protests against the hollowness and deadness of a baptized rationalism. It witnesses to the presence of the risen Saviour in the church; and in that we may well rejoice.

We accept, therefore, the doctrine of the Eucharist, which has always been held with more or less distinctness by the reformed churches throughout the world. We recognize in the Lord's Supper, not only a commemorative

rite but a true communion in the body and blood of the Lord. It is, to the end of the world, a witness to His love in giving Himself *for* His people; but it is also a witness and a token that He gives Himself *to* them.

The apostles must have understood it as preëminently an expression of His love. We cannot but long to roll back the centuries, and enter that upper room where the eleven with tearful wonder, gaze upon their adored Master, so soon to leave them. The night is waxing late. The feast is over. They sing a hymn, and are about to depart. They are arrested by His voice; He has yet much to say to them; for they need consolation and strength. In a short hour or two, He will be separated from them; and they will be like sheep having no shepherd. Not thus will He have them go out into the dark night—into the darker night of sorrow and conflict and suffering. He has farewell counsel and consolation to impart before He is separated from them to undergo His cross and passion.

It has been much debated, by scholars, whether the farewell discourse was spoken in the supper-room, or in the open air, on the way to Gethsemane. It is not essentially a question of much importance; but we incline to a modification of the latter hypothesis. It seems probable that the first part of the discourse—so much as is recorded in John xiv.—was spoken at the table—wondrous table-talk indeed!—and that the remainder, with the prayer, was uttered after our Lord, having said, “Arise, let us go hence,” went out with the eleven. The limits of this book, already overgrown, forbid an extended exposition of the farewell discourse. Happily, there are few passages of Scripture which are at once so profound and so transparent. The reader, it is hoped, will at this point read that discourse, without note or comment from beginning to end. Then he may, if so disposed, glance at the following reflections upon it.

We are struck with the divine calmness of this discourse. One recognizes in it an undertone of sorrow; but, as a whole, it is like a cloudless summer evening, when earth, sky and ocean, suffused with gleams of purple and gold, seem entranced, and a sacred peace broods over all. Not a sentence, not a word, betrays the agitation of fear, or doubt, or disappointment; but all is serene, though pensive and tender. It is clear that our Lord was not surprised by the tragical end of His mission. He had all along expected and foretold it; and when at last He felt that His hour was come, He was not shocked or discomposed. In the midst of His spiritual household He discoursed concerning His departure in language almost joyous and exultant. Nay, more; He instituted a feast to be forever celebrated in commemoration of His death. If He seemed at all troubled in spirit it was on account of His anxious and sorrowful disciples, who were unable, as yet, to understand the relation between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. To them He would impart His own interior tranquillity; and the scope of the whole discourse is expressed in the wondrous benediction:—"PEACE I leave with you; MY PEACE I give unto you."

In His gracious endeavor to encourage and comfort His dejected apostles, our Lord's selection of topics was marked by divine wisdom. They were already cowering and trembling under the shadow of the approaching storm; they were terror-stricken and heart-broken by the thought of His leaving them. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God; believe also in Me." See that you are fixed by faith on the Rock of ages. Do you mourn for My departure? Do you not, then, know whither and for what purpose I am going? "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and

prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "During My absence I will prepare you a habitation in some peaceful world, far beyond the troubles and conflicts of earth; and I will return for you in due time. Be assured that our separation will be of brief duration; I shall long for your presence in the Father's house." Having answered the characteristic questions of Thomas and Philip, by setting forth in words of wonderful depth and grandeur, His relation to the Father as His express image; and His relation to men, as the only way to the Father; He goes on to animate their drooping hearts by promising to send to them the Divine Paraclete—that other Comforter—who should supply and more than supply the lack of His bodily presence. In fact, He would Himself come to them in the life-giving and light-giving energy of the Holy Spirit. Those who truly loved Him should not be left in the loneliness of orphanage; but He would manifest Himself to them; nay, He and the Father would make Their abode with them. Again He promises them the Comforter, and pronounces upon them His effectual blessing, bidding them, if they love Him, to rejoice that He is going to the Father.

After they had left the supper-room, and while they were on their way to the garden, our Lord resumed His discourse. It is quite possible that, pausing a few minutes, near one of the vineyards beyond the city wall, He pointed to some luxuriant vine, and said: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman." Your union with Me is vital, indissoluble. We are forever one by a mutual indwelling. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall be fruitful, and you shall prevail in prayer; for living in Me, asking in My name, you shall receive all you desire. Assuring them of His love—love stronger than death,—calling them, not servants, but friends, He

commands them to love one another, and to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God. Forewarning them of the persecutions which should come upon them, He fortifies their minds against them with the thought that they would suffer with Him and for His name's sake; and with a *third* promise of the Comforter, now also called the Spirit of Truth, He tells them plainly that the time was coming when they would be put out of the synagogues, and, like beasts of prey be hunted to the death. Once more, and for the fourth time, He repeats His promise that He would send to them the Paraclete: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He shall show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

This then is the central topic in this discourse—the coming and work of the Holy Spirit. The departure of Christ was an indispensable prerequisite to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. His humanity must needs be glorified, before He can be the channel for conveying to His people this crowning gift. The presence of the Comforter would fill them with life, and light, and power, and joy. Therefore, instead of mourning His departure they

ought to rejoice in it. It is to be noted that our Lord, in this discourse, repeatedly speaks of His own coming as connected with that of the Comforter, or rather as one with it. "A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while and ye shall see Me, because I go unto the Father." Doubtless we are to understand, in this place, that spiritual coming of the Lord in the power of the Holy Ghost, which is to be at last suddenly signalized and consummated in His visible appearing, without sin, unto salvation. This visible return of the Lord will not supersede the work of the Spirit, but immeasurably augment the heavenly gift.

Finally, telling them plainly that He was about to leave the world and go unto the Father; and encouraging them to ask boldly whatsoever they needed in His name, because the Father Himself loved them; He concludes His farewell discourse in words of mingled warning and consolation: "Behold the hour cometh, and is now come, when ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but BE OF GOOD CHEER; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD." Having said these words, Jesus, standing there under the starry heavens, lifted up His eyes and uttered that marvellous high-priestly prayer, which can best be understood by those who study it, in solitude and silence, on their knees.

CHAPTER X.

GETHSEMANE.

LOCATION OF THE GARDEN—CHRIST'S AGONY AND BLOODY SWEAT—AN
ANGEL STRENGTHENS HIM.

MATTHEW XXVI. 36-46. MARK XIV. 32-42. LUKE XXII. 39-46. JOHN XVIII. 1.

No spot is more interesting to the Christian heart than Gethsemane. Tradition gives the name to an enclosure not far from the eastern wall of Jerusalem, containing eight gnarled and age-worn olive trees. These trees, quite different from any others in the vicinity, and "the most venerable of their race on the surface of the earth,"* witness to the antiquity of the tradition. As the place of our Lord's agony and of His betrayal must have been peculiarly sacred to the apostles and early Christians, it is not easy to see how it could have become unknown. Eusebius and Jerome mention the place as well known in their day; and ever since it has been a favorite resort of Christian pilgrims. We are persuaded that though the existing enclosure may be of less extent than the ancient garden, it is not far from the very spot which was forever consecrated by the agony and bloody sweat of the Lord. It was a spot to which Jesus had been wont to retire, previous to His last mysterious and awful visit.† It probably belonged to some friend—possibly to the family

* Dean Stanley.

† Luke xxi. 37; compare xxii. 39.

of Martha. It was secluded and still; and the fig, pomegranate, olive and vine, offered their "hospitable shade" to the Son of man, in his hours of repose and devotion.

This last visit of Jesus to Gethsemane was in the night, probably between the hours of eleven and twelve o'clock. As He stood there at the entrance of the garden, the moon, then near its full, was shining brightly on tower and palace, on the temple and its cluster of marble out-buildings, on mountain and valley, now thickly dotted with the tents and booths of the multitude who had come up to attend the Passover. Our Lord, however, at this moment, had nothing to do with the fair outside world; He was advancing to the great spiritual conflict by which the eternal destiny of the human family was to be determined. Before entering the garden, He divided His little company into two bands. Selecting Peter, James and John to accompany Him, He said to the other eight: "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." He knew, perhaps, that they could not witness His agony without peril to their faith; but He desired the presence of the *three* who had witnessed His transfiguration and some of His mightiest miracles, and had, from the first, received many special proofs of His confidence.

And now, as He passed into the garden, a shadow deeper than that of the olive-trees fell upon Him—a shadow that wrapped His soul in the blackness of darkness. He began to be *sorrowful*, and *very heavy*, and *sore amazed*. Those who have been struck—and who has not?—with the calm, consolatory, even triumphant tone of the farewell discourse, may regard this sudden and terrible dejection as surprising; but let it be considered that our Lord, though sinless, was true man; and that such rapid alternations of conflicting emotions—especially in seasons of extraordinary excitement,—are intensely human. A great general, on the eve of a decisive battle,

the issue of which he regards as certain, may express the highest confidence and even joy; but when his columns are about to charge the enemy, he may inwardly shudder at the approaching carnage, and at the widespread suffering by which alone victory can be achieved. I am far from the irreverence of comparing the Captain of our salvation with any earthly warrior, except in respect of that humanity which He shared with all men. He had reached the crisis of His redeeming work. He had freely offered Himself for the sacrifice; and now it was to be required of Him. He was to suffer all that the malice of hell and the rage of ungodly men could inflict. He saw just before Him, as if already present, His betrayal, the insults and mockeries which would be heaped upon Him, the lingering agonies of the cross, the cold obstruction of the tomb, and whatever of dread and mystery there may be in death; He knew all He must suffer *for* sin and *from* sin; and though His purpose did not waver, His human soul, in part because it was sinless, started back in instinctive loathing and horror from the mighty woe. Pain and suffering were alien to that Holy One, who but for His own voluntary surrender, could never have felt a mortal shock or pang, but only the fulness and harmony of the powers of an endless life. There was in His soul a depth of holy sensibility of which a *sinner* can not conceive. To bear the sins of men, to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself, to suffer death at their hands;—shall we wonder that the Son of man shrunk from this?

Though He knew that He must tread the wine-press alone, and that of the people there would be none with Him, His words, at this moment, revealed a craving for human sympathy: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me.” The pain and anguish which He felt were so intense that He

seems to have apprehended death, then and there; and though the three disciples could not help Him bear the burden which was crushing His soul, He desired to have them near Him in His deadly anguish, not to pray with Him or for Him, but to watch with Him. How He loved them! And how He longed for their love! "And He went forward a little," (Luke says, "a stone's cast,") "and fell on His face, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him, And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt." As this prayer is the key to this mysterious passage of our Lord's history, we must reverently inquire into its meaning.

In the first place, then, let it be noted that Jesus, so far from intimating any doubt of His Sonship, or of the Father's love, expresses the highest filial confidence. "Abba, Father"—thus in the hour of His agony, He comes to God. That He was personally an object of divine wrath, that the Father was angry with Him, is a supposition contradicted by every word He utters. Even on the cross, the exclamation, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" implies that even while conscious of a fearful desertion, He felt that His relation to the Father was unchanged. The Father loved the Son as much in the garden, and on the cross, as ever before or ever afterwards.

It must be noted in the second place, that this prayer implies, or rather plainly declares, that what our Lord was about to suffer was in fulfillment of the Father's will. He prayed that *if it was the Father's will*, the cup might pass from Him; but if it was the Father's will that He should drink it, He submissively accepted the deadly draught. He did not intimate that His sufferings would come upon Him *incidentally*, in the prosecution of His re-

deeming work. He recognized the mighty woe, called by Him "*this cup*," as laid upon Him by the Father's hand. The case then stands thus: the Father, loving the Son with infinite and unchangeable tenderness, wills that He should undergo peculiar and unexampled suffering; the Son, not doubting the Father's love, while He shrinks from that suffering, resigns Himself to it in submission to the Father's will.

We come now to the question, what was that CUP which the Father's hand pressed to the lips of His beloved Son? The phrase itself, employed by our Lord on a former occasion* in the same sense, was borrowed from the Old Testament Scriptures, where it signifies extreme sufferings. A striking example of its use may be seen in Isaiah li. 22, 23: "Thus saith thy Lord, the LORD, that pleadeth the cause of His people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again; but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee." In Jeremiah xxv. 15, 28, the same figure is expanded to the dimensions of an allegory. In every case it is the cup of divine wrath; and it is represented as producing trembling, desolation, astonishment, and anguish. Now when our Lord speaks of the cup, He doubtless means His whole passion then commencing; all the sufferings which He was to endure according to the Father's will. And it is quite true, and quite in keeping with the language of Scripture, that the cup which was appointed Him was the cup of the wrath of God. And this by no means contradicts what has been already said touching the Father's unchangeable love to His Son.

What is meant by this phrase—the wrath of God? It can only mean such wrath as springs from absolute love;

* Matt. xx. 20.

for GOD IS LOVE. There can be no feeling in the divine heart which is not some form of holy love—of love, all-knowing, all-just, all-wise. Need we prove that such love is capable of anger—of wrath—of burning indignation? Is not paternal love, when outraged by filial ingratitude and rebellion, terrible in its displeasure? Divine love is revealed from heaven as wrath against sin—the wrath, not only of an insulted Father, but a holy sovereign—a wrath, therefore, revealed *in the way of law*. It is free from all perturbation of passion, from any mixture of hatred against the persons of transgressors; but it is real and infinite displeasure. The wrath of God against sin is such wrath as Jesus Himself manifested in the days of His humiliation. He revealed the Father. He *was in the Father* and the *Father in Him*. The divine anger *was His own anger*. It were a grievous error to imagine that there was a lack of unity between the Father and the Son; that they, in fact, took opposite sides; the former that of justice, the latter of mercy. There was—there could be—no contrariety of feeling or purpose, between the consubstantial Persons of the adorable Trinity. All that was in the Father was in the Son by eternal self-communication. The wrath of God against sin was therefore in the Son as well as in the Father; in bearing that wrath our Lord *bore His own wrath*; that is to say, He felt an abhorrence and indignation against the sins of man—and He was man—truly divine. His holy heart was burdened, grieved, wounded, broken, by the sins of *His brethren*.

Though He Himself was immaculate, He thoroughly identified Himself with our race in its fallen state. He became bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. He entered into our nature and our condition. By a sympathy absolutely unique, He took our sins on His sinless soul; realized, as we never can, their infinite foulness and turpitude; and grasped, in His outstretched arms, that fearful thing,

that aggregate of eternal pains and horrors—DEATH—the penalty of sin. Thus while He carried in His heart the wrath of God against sin, He was bound to His brethren by large and tender sympathy; He took them with all their sins and miseries, on His own soul; He felt the depravity and guilt of mankind as indeed foreign to Him, nevertheless His own. In the consciousness of the God-man, the holy anger of God against sin and a human sense of the evil of sin and its desert of punishment, were brought into contact. Hence the feeling of inward disharmony and conflict, so foreign to that consciousness; hence, the *sore amazement, the exceeding heaviness, the sorrow unto death, the agony*, of the Lord in the garden.

Though HE had no sin of which to repent, He was the vicarious Penitent of mankind. His sorrow was godly sorrow for sin—for man's sin—and again I repeat, HE WAS MAN; and it was a sorrow commensurate with the sin, a sorrow so holy, so full, so intense, that it satisfied the feeling of the divine nature, called sometimes justice, sometimes, wrath; that is to say, His sorrow satisfied *His own* justice, *His own* wrath against sin. He put a true estimate on transgression, and justified the penalty. Nay, He truly suffered that penalty; for He took it on His own soul, felt its unutterable bitterness, and in the full, adequate, conscious realization of it, finally DIED. Thus sin was not only repented of, but punished in Him; thus He suffered for us *the curse and the pains of hell*. Thus He confessed, as the Head and Representative of mankind, that the race was justly condemned; thus He vindicated the law and government of God; thus He bore the divine wrath and satisfied divine justice. Nevertheless, He was, and He knew that He was, all the while the object of the Father's complacency. On the other hand, He suffered, and He knew that He suffered, in fulfillment of the Father's will. The Father gave Him up and appointed Him

to the cup of death, to the baptism of blood. And He accepted Him as a substitute for mankind; and His sufferings as a sufficient expiation of the sins of the world. For all was done in pursuance of an eternal, mutual purpose, properly called a covenant, between the Father and the Son.

Such then was the cup from which Jesus prayed to be delivered: "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me." The petition is prompted by the feeling of unendurable pain: it is the instinctive cry of weakness under a burden which it feels itself unable to bear. It would seem indeed that He was about to expire; for, in answer to His prayer, an angel was sent to strengthen Him. "When He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, He was heard in that He feared."* After His strength was thus supernaturally reinforced, "being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." How long He lay prostrate in this awful agony we know not. At length, He remembered His three disciples, rose from the ground and returned to them. Alas, can it be! He finds them sleeping. How unutterably mournful are His words to Peter! "What! could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Lest the reproof should seem too cutting, He adds, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Again He retires; again He falls upon the ground; again He prays; but there is a change. He no longer asks that the cup may pass away; He is distinctly conscious that it can not pass; "O My Father, if this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done!"

* Hebrews v. 7.

Thus His human will and His human sensibility, are immolated to the will of God. He is obedient unto death. Henceforth He has no choice. He takes the cup from the Father's hand. He advances alone into the dread Thermopylæ of the universe; He exposes Himself to the full shock of the powers of hell; He bares His bosom to the bolts of divine wrath; He lays Himself on the altar, and awaits the stroke of the sacrificial knife. Once more His heart prompts Him to seek the place where the disciples are—watching?—no, but again sleeping. What He said to them is not recorded; they heard Him not; they answered Him not. O Thou lonely Sufferer! is there then no sympathy for Thee in the wide world—only in God!

For the third time He retires to pray, saying the same words. Returning to the still sleeping disciples, He exclaims, “Do you sleep now and take your rest? Behold, the hour is come! The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners! Rise up, let us go! Lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand!” Jesus had doubtless caught a glimpse of the party with torches and lanterns that Judas was at that moment leading forth from the city. He goes forth to meet His betrayer.

CHAPTER XI.

JESUS BETRAYED: PETER'S DENIAL.

MATTHEW XXVI. 47-75. MARK XIV. 43-72. LUKE XXII. 47-62. JOHN XVIII. 2-27.

AFTER JUDAS left the supper-room, he prosecuted his horrible enterprise with extraordinary energy. The arrangements which were made, at his instigation, for the apprehension of Jesus, were not only complete but needlessly elaborate. The officers of the Sanhedrim gathered around them a promiscuous multitude, armed with swords and staves; and a detachment of the Roman cohort—if not the cohort itself*—quartered in the tower of Antonia, was secured from the proper authorities. These preparations were prompted both by fear and policy. There may have been in the mind of the traitor—perhaps also in the minds of the rulers themselves—a vague apprehension of some terrible supernatural interference; they had more reason to look for an attempt at rescue by the multitude; and in any case, it was the part of policy to demonstrate by ostentatious and exaggerated precautions, the danger to be apprehended from Jesus and His party. The band was provided with lanterns and torches, not only because this was usual in all military expeditions by night, but also because, though it was then full moon, it might be necessary to search for

* Such is the meaning of the word translated “band” in John xviii. 3.

their prisoner among the rocks and caves which abounded in the valley, or among the trees and vines of the garden.

Judas, having first promised to identify Jesus by kissing Him, led forth the multitude towards Gethsemane; for he knew that Jesus often resorted thither. The tramp of so many armed men must have sounded through the deep and narrow valley; and our Lord seems to have heard the sound and seen the glare of the torches while He was yet in the depth of the garden. Hastily rousing His sleeping disciples, He advanced to the entrance, just as Judas, walking a little before the band, was passing in. With affected haste, the traitor approached Him, and saying, "Master, Master!" kissed Him. Jesus, with regal calmness and majesty, replied, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Then, doubtless in a changed voice, and with a terrible emphasis, He added, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Not pausing, however, for a moment, He passed out to meet the officers and the multitude. As He stood there in the moonlight, and under the red glare of the torches, with the traces of His divine sorrow upon His countenance, and the majesty of innocence stamped upon His brow, the multitude were struck with awe. "Whom seek ye?" He asked. He had a reason for ascertaining just how far their warrant extended. When they answered "Jesus of Nazareth," He rejoined, "I AM HE." The words were uttered with such godlike power, and accompanied by such an outflashing of glory, that they started back, as if struck by a thunder-bolt, and fell to the ground. So the Nazarenes had been overpowered when they were about to kill him; so the buyers and sellers had been expelled from the temple by the terror of His presence. On this occasion it was not His purpose to paralyze His enemies, and so escape out of their hands. Therefore, He reassured them by asking again, "Whom seek ye?" Again

they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." "I have told you," He answered "that I am He. If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way." Thus it appears that Jesus had hastened to the entrance of the garden, in order to protect His disciples, whom He had left there when He retired to pray. John recognized in this, a fulfillment of the saying in His last prayer, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none." There was a close connection between this temporal deliverance, and their eternal salvation.

In these last words Jesus recognized the authority of the officers, and virtually surrendered Himself. This gave them courage to lay hands upon His person. *We* can not think of this indignity offered to the Son of God without horror; and we do not therefore wonder that the disciples, cried out: "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" Or that Peter, seeing that they were about to bind his Master, drew his sword, and aimed a deadly blow at the High Priest's servant, who was probably most forward and unfeeling in the perpetration of the outrage. Jesus reproved his rashness, saying: "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I can not now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Had He not said, a little while before, in His agony: "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done?" Having thus declared to men what He had before said to God, that He yielded Himself up to suffering and death, He healed the servant's ear. Thus the fiery and headlong but not "coward" Peter, escaped being arrested with his Master. Judged by an earthly standard, Peter was not only brave,

but fool-hardy; for he drew his sword on this occasion, in the face of hundreds of armed men. But for the majesty of our Lord's presence, and the miracle, he would have been instantly cut down. That Roman cohort, we conjecture, did not usually spare any who resisted them with drawn swords in the execution of their orders.

Jesus, while patiently submitting to be bound, had a keen sense of the insulting cruelty of the treatment to which He was subjected. In words of true dignity He said to the multitude: "Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, to takè me? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." At this moment, the disciples, seeing their Master bound in the hands of His enemies, and inferring from His words that He would not deliver Himself out of their hands, suddenly forsook Him and fled. Two or three of them, including Peter and John, lingered near the place, and finally followed the procession into the city; but of the others we hear no more till after the resurrection. While, however, the apostles fled away into the darkness, there occurred an unexpected and touching instance of enthusiastic devotion. A young man, who, it seems, had been roused from his bed by the tumult, and had rushed out in his linen night-cloth, finding that Jesus had been seized by his enemies, fell into the procession, and drawn by love, followed the Lord, utterly forgetful of his half-naked condition. He was made sensible of his imprudence, when the young men of the crowd roughly laid hold of him. Eluding their grasp by leaving the linen cloth in their hands, he escaped by flight. Tradition says that this young man, was JOHN MARK, the author of the second gospel, in which alone the incident is recorded.

Behold the Son of man, with His hands bound together

like those of a criminal, walking meekly amidst His enemies, towards the city-gate, and thence to the palace of the high priest; perhaps we should not err if we called it the dwelling of the high priests; for both Annas and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, bore the title. The latter, as we have seen, was the legal and acting high priest; but the former wielded the real power belonging to the office, and was perhaps revered by the people as the high priest *de jure*.

That we may understand the narrative as given by the several evangelists, it is necessary that we should frame some probable conception of the localities mentioned. Though we do not know where the palace of the high priest was situated, its plan of construction was probably like that of other oriental houses. "An oriental house," says Dr. Edward Robinson, "is usually built around a quadrangular interior court; into which there is a passage, sometimes arched, through the front part of the house, closed next the street by a heavy folding gate, with a smaller wicket for single persons, kept by a porter."* The house of Caiaphas was undoubtedly of this description. The interior court is called by the evangelists *the hall* and *the palace*; and the passage into the street beneath the front of the house, *the porch*. It is almost certain that Annas and Caiaphas resided in the same palace. Surely on such a night as this, Annas, the real ecclesiastical head of the nation, if not, as many think, the actual president of the Sanhedrim, would be near his son-in-law, to direct his movements. It is quite probable that he occupied rooms in one wing of the palace, which must have been of considerable extent. To him Jesus was first taken, perhaps at His own request, possibly out of deference to his age and acknowledged preëminence

in the hierarchy. Caiaphas was but his shadow and echo; and it is impossible to decide from the inspired history when they acted separately and when together.

After Jesus had disappeared within the gate of the palace, two of His disciples, Peter, and another who is nameless,* were following at a distance, the former lingering behind the latter. Peter was agitated by conflicting emotions. He was irresistibly drawn by his love to his Master to the place of His trial; the feeling which prompted the exclamation,—“I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death,” was yet in his heart; but he had now a vivid sense of the danger which threatened *himself* as well as his Lord. Did he not apprehend an encounter with Malchus, whose ear he had wounded, or with some one who had witnessed the blow? That he followed afar off did not imply extraordinary timidity; that he followed at all was a proof of unusual courage. The other disciple, who was known to the High Priest and his household, was admitted by the portress without hesitation; but Peter, a stranger, coming a moment later, was excluded. His fellow-disciple, finding that Peter had not followed him into the palace, returned, and by a word to the portress, secured his admission.

The apostle, seeing a fire of coals, in the open court, sat down with the servants to warm himself, but his inward disquiet caused him soon to rise. Something in his manner having attracted the notice of the sharp-sighted portress, she came forward, and said, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth?—Art thou not,” she asked directly, “one of this man’s disciples?”—Peter’s courage at once vanished, not, probably, because he apprehended danger by reason of his connection with Jesus, but rather in con-

* Some say *John*,—why, except to enjoy the pleasure of guessing, I can not imagine.

sequence of his attempt on the life of Malchus. Here, in the High Priest's house, among the fellow-servants of the man whom he had intended to slay, a recognition might cost him his life. This construction of Peter's motives is not only charitable but just; and it ought not for a moment to be lost sight of in this narrative. Peter's first denial, though apparently strong, was in form a little ambiguous; "I know not what thou sayest." Pressed, perhaps, with other questions, he boldly declared that he knew not Jesus, and was not His disciple. It would seem that each so-called denial was made up of *several denials on the same occasion*. Having silenced the portress, Peter, conscience-stricken, resolved to retire; but on reaching the porch, another maid, who perhaps had taken the place of the former at the gate, said to those who were standing near, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter was now thoroughly alarmed; believing that he was an object of general suspicion, he denied with an oath any connection with the Lord. To avert suspicion, he determined to remain in the palace till he could withdraw without exciting attention. For a whole hour he continued in the hall, probably conversing with many, till at length his uncouth Galilean dialect—differing from the Aramean of Jerusalem like that of Yorkshire from the English of London and New York—again awakened suspicion. "What has brought a Galilean here, in the night, except his interest in the fate of Jesus? His disciples are all Galileans:"—so they seem to have reasoned. At length one of the company said to him, "Surely, thou art one of them; thou art a Galilean; for thy speech bewrayeth thee." Peter, driven to extremity, broke out into horrible oaths, declaring, even swearing, that he knew not the man of whom they spoke. At that moment in the midst of his imprecations the cock crew, and Peter came to himself. At the same moment, Jesus, as He was led

through the hall, *turned and looked on Peter*. That look broke his heart. It was a look, not of anger, scarcely of reproach, but of divine grief and pity. Peter thought no longer of his personal danger, of the obstacles to his retreat, or of anything but his great sin. He who ought to have been ready to testify in behalf of his Master, had again and again denied Him even with oaths and execrations. The sin was indeed great; and when he thought thereon he wept. His repentance was deep and bitter, and it followed swiftly on the heels of his sin.

Let not the warm-hearted, impulsive apostle be judged too harshly. He was, not a perfect Christian, but a brave and noble man. He had all those qualities which would have made a brilliant soldier,—daring, generosity, devotion; he was ready to strike with the sword, even with fearful odds against him; he followed Jesus into the midst of His enemies; and we must not for a moment suppose that his denial was of the nature of treason, or renunciation of his Lord. It was a stratagem intended to deceive his questioners and secure his personal safety. It was such a stratagem as many of our brave soldiers employed, during the late civil war, to save their lives when they fell into the hands of their enemies. How many of them denied that they were soldiers of the Union, and even professed to belong to the other party? We do not therefore call them cowards and traitors, but hold many of them in honor, as brave men and true. Peter fell into the thoroughly oriental sins of lying and swearing; but it was, as he believed, to save his life. His deep, tender love to his Master, through the whole of that terrible trial, is apparent from the fact that one look from Jesus brought him instantly to repentance. All we can say is, that he was not as yet qualified for the crown of martyrdom. How could he have been when the Holy Ghost was not yet given?

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS.

JESUS BEFORE ANNAS—JESUS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.

MATTHEW XXVI. 57-68; XXVII. 1-26. MARK XIV. 53-65; XV. 1-15. LUKE XXII. 63-71; XXIII. 1-25.

MENTION has been often made, in the course of this history, of the great council or court of the Jewish church, called the Sanhedrim. As Jesus is about to be put on trial before that body, it becomes important to explain its constitution, its powers, and its method of procedure. It was composed of seventy, some say seventy-one members, among whom were *the chief priests*, or heads of the twenty-four classes into which the priesthood was divided; *the elders*, men of age and experience who were held in reverence for wisdom; and *the scribes*, who had made the law a special study. The High Priest, and those who had filled the office, were members *ex officio*. The officers of this court were the president, often if not always, the High Priest; the vice-president, who was called *the father of the hall of judgment*; and two secretaries, one of whom recorded the votes for acquittal, and the other, those for condemnation. The usual place of meeting was a stone chamber, called Gazith, at the south-east angle of the temple enclosure. though on extraordinary occasions the court assembled at the palace of the High Priest. The members sat in the form of a semicircle, in front of the president and vice-president. The jurisdiction of this

court extended to all ecclesiastical offenses, especially to idolatry, blasphemy, and religious imposture, as by false prophets and false Christs. Not many years before the trial of our Lord, the power of life and death had been taken away from the Sanhedrim, and vested in the Roman procurator. The Talmud says that this change was made forty years previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. Consequently, in the time of Christ, this tribunal could do no more than pass sentence of death; its execution depended on the will of the governor.

The proceedings of the Sanhedrim were ordinarily conducted in strict accordance with established rules and precedents. It was an essential rule that no capital case should be tried at a night session; and that sentence should not be pronounced till after at least one adjournment. Both these rules were violated in the trial of our Lord. The members regarded His case as extraordinary, and they hurried through it, lest their purpose should be frustrated by a sudden rising of the people. They had in fact prejudged the case. It had been long before determined that Jesus should die; and the judicial process now pushed to an issue was intended to throw a decent veil over the murder.

It was probably two o'clock in the morning when Jesus was brought before the hoary inquisitor, Annas. It seems probable that he, and not Caiaphas, conducted the preliminary and comparatively private examination. It was his purpose to draw from Jesus Himself something which might be made the ground of a formal accusation. He therefore questioned Him touching the matter of His teaching, and the number of His disciples. He assumed that Jesus had a secret doctrine, and that He was the head of a secret society. This insinuation our Lord repelled. "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews

always resort; and in secret have I said nothing." This was strictly true; for though Jesus had taught His disciples privately, He had taught no secret doctrine; but on the contrary had uniformly charged them to proclaim openly what they had thus learned. In His answer to Annas He declined to say *what* He had taught; for He saw that a snare was laid for Him, perhaps also for His disciples. "Why askest thou Me? Ask them who heard Me, what I have said unto them; behold they know what I said." At this moment one of the officers who had Jesus in custody struck Him, probably on the mouth, with his open hand, saying, "Answerest Thou the high priest so?" The Lord, exemplifying His own precept,* calmly said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?" That blow on the face of the Lamb of God still sounds through the world. Consider: He stood there bound.

Annas did not reprove or punish the unlawful outrage; but finding that he could elicit nothing of importance from the Prisoner, sent Him in His bonds,—adding perhaps, another chain—to Caiaphas.† It was probably while Jesus was passing through the court or hall, on His way to the apartments of Caiaphas, that He turned and looked on Peter, who had just denied Him for the third time. It must have been now between three and four o'clock in the morning.

Meanwhile the members of the Sanhedrim had been assembling, having been summoned perhaps by special messengers. There seems to have been a full attendance; and they came together for earnest work. What was to be done was well understood; but how to do it occasioned

* Matthew v. 39.

† John xviii. 24. "Annas *sent* Him bound"—not "*had sent*," as in the authorized version.

them no little perplexity. It was necessary that some distinct accusation should be brought forward; and that the crime charged should be a capital one. Now Jesus had, according to the bigoted views of the Pharisees, been guilty of breaking the Sabbath by healing on that day; and He had professed to forgive sins, which they construed as blasphemy; but these were not offenses which they ventured to prosecute before such a tribunal as the Sanhedrim, composed in part of Sadducees. Yet it seemed easier to establish a charge of blasphemy than any other; and this seems to have been the substance, at least, of the indictment on which He was tried. Many witnesses were brought forward; but their testimony was so contradictory that they were speedily put aside. Though Jesus was silent and had no advocate, His judges felt that He could not be convicted without positive proof of some overt offense. Among other witnesses, two came forward, who testified that they heard him say on one occasion: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." These men had probably been present in the temple, some three years before, when Jesus in answer to the demand of the Jews for a sign said to them: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;"* and it is barely possible that they understood Him as uttering a threat against the temple, which many at least would have regarded as blasphemy; but the Sanhedrim saw not only that the witnesses did not agree in reporting His words, but that, if really spoken, those words were at worst but a vain-glorious boast, and in no sense blasphemous. No other witnesses appearing, the High Priest, perplexed and alarmed, started from his seat, and said to Jesus: "Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which

* John xi 19.

these witness against Thee?" Jesus was still silent. Then Caiaphas, availing himself of a prerogative of his office, put the Lord under oath: "I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God?" Thus adjured by the theocratic head of the nation, Jesus answered: "I AM; AND YE SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN SITTING ON THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER AND COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

Let it be noted that these words were spoken by our Lord, under oath, when on trial for His life. He knew when He uttered them, that He sealed His own doom, so far as it lay in the hands of His judges. His person and mission had been to multitudes in His own day, as it is to multitudes in ours, a mystery. He had once before said in so many words, *I am the Christ*, but it had been to a Samaritan woman; and He had permitted His disciples to profess their faith in Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God; but He had charged them to tell no man; and it would have been impossible for the Sanhedrim to prove that He claimed to be the Messiah. They were, indeed, morally certain that He had put Himself before the people in that character; but they were compelled, at last, to seek for legal evidence at His own lips.

It is extremely doubtful whether a declaration that He was the Christ would in itself be accounted blasphemy; but when joined to the assertion of His Divine Sonship, it might easily seem to rise into that fearful sin. On a former occasion the Jews had "sought to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God;"* and when afterwards He said in terms still more explicit: "I and My Father are one," they took up stones to stone Him, saying: "We stone Thee for blasphemy, and

* John v. 18.

because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.”* These instances prove conclusively that the Jews regarded the assertion of His Divine Sonship as tantamount to a declaration of His Deity. Had this been a gross misunderstanding of His words, our Lord would surely have set them right. Had He only meant to say that He was a Son of God, He could easily have removed from their minds the terrible prejudice by which they were overmastered. But they had not misunderstood Him; and He virtually declared that they had not.

It is indeed doubtful whether the Jews believed that the Messiah would be the Son of God in this high and peculiar sense, but it is certain that the High Priest, who had heard how constantly Jesus spoke of God as His Father, intended by his artful question to draw from Him a declaration of His Divinity as well as of His Messiahship. And such a declaration, even more full and explicit than he could have expected, followed his solemn and authoritative adjuration. Jesus then and there calmly witnessed that He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed; that He was God manifest in the flesh; that He was the rightful King and Judge of the world. Hearing His words, the High Priest rent his clothes; and not waiting for the formal verdict of the Sanhedrim, pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy. By a unanimous vote He was sentenced to death. Jesus, silent and bound, was now subjected to cruel indignities. They spat upon Him; they blindfolded Him, and then buffeted and smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying: “Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ; who is it that smote Thee?” “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.”†

* John x. 30.

† Isaiah liii. 7.

This meeting of the Sanhedrim was irregular in respect both to time and place. To give legal effect to the proceedings, the judges deemed it necessary to hold a formal session in the morning. They therefore led Him, apparently in a large and formal procession, from the High Priest's palace into their own council chamber on the temple mount. At this session they examined no witnesses, but questioned our Lord Himself: "Art Thou the Christ? tell us." They did not now ask Him whether He was the Son of God; for they were now anxious to give a political complexion to His offense. They were about to carry the case to Pilate, the procurator; and they knew how little importance he would attach to a charge of blasphemy. Jesus, perceiving their purpose, gave a less explicit answer than they expected: "If I tell you, ye will not believe. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer Me, nor let Me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." Your interrogations are all intended, not to satisfy your minds in regard to My guilt or innocence, but to bring about My death. You have prejudged My case; you have determined on My death; but be assured that hereafter I shall be the Judge and you the culprits at My bar. My judicial function will be exercised in that world to which yours will not extend. He called Himself now the Son of man; not the Messiah, or the Son of God. "Art Thou, then," they asked, "the Son of God? And He said unto them, Ye say that I am;" or, I am. It is necessary that He should solemnly declare again and again, His true character; for it must appear that they rejected and condemned Him in that character. And this they did not shrink from doing: "What need we any further witnesses? for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth." The sentence of death followed as a matter of course.

They must at this stage of their proceedings have sorely felt their national humiliation. They could, indeed, pass sentence, but they could not carry it into effect without an express order from the procurator, Pontius Pilate. The case must be carried to *him*. What they knew of his character, and of Roman law, seems to have caused them some misgivings touching the issue of their prosecution; but they had among them cunning and determined men, who devised a plan of procedure which could scarcely fail of success. This was to go in a body to Pilate, inform him that they had tried the prisoner and condemned Him to death, and request his approval of the sentence. They probably hoped that he would grant their request without any investigation of the charges. Should this fail, they resolved to accuse Him, not of blasphemy, a light offense in the eyes of a Roman magistrate, but of crimes against civil order and the authority of the emperor. Meanwhile, we can not doubt that their emissaries were instructed to stir up *the mob of Jerusalem* to clamor for the death of Jesus. To effect this, nothing more would be necessary than to report that He had been convicted by the Sanhedrim of blasphemy.

CHAPTER XIII.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD.

POLITICAL CONDITION OF JUDEA AT THIS TIME—THE OFFICE OF PROCURATOR—PONTIUS PILATE—HIS ANTECEDENTS—HIS CHARACTER—JESUS IS BROUGHT BEFORE HIM—EXAMINATION—HEROD—PILATE'S FRUITLESS STRUGGLE TO RELEASE JESUS—DELIVERS HIM TO BE CRUCIFIED—JUDAS.

MATTHEW XXVII. 1-30. MARK XV. 1-19. LUKE XXIII. 1-25. JOHN XVIII. 28-10; XIX. 1-16.

JUDEA was at this time a subordinate division of the great province of Syria, and was governed by a procurator who was responsible to the proconsul. Though a procurator was in most cases but the fiscal agent of the emperor, authorized to collect the revenue and to act as judge in causes connected with it, he was not seldom the head of the administration, both civil and military.

The procurator of Judea, in the time of our Lord, was Pontius Pilate. Of his history little is known, but that little warrants the belief that he was a Roman officer of average capacity, deeply imbued with the pride and prejudices of his class, and resolute, sometimes cruel, in asserting the rights of his imperial master, and in maintaining his personal authority. Appointed procurator in the twelfth year of Tiberius, (A. D. 25-6) by one of his first acts, he outraged, through ignorance or contempt, the deepest convictions and prejudices of the Jewish heart. In removing his head-quarters from Cesarea to Jerusalem, he permitted if he did not order his soldiers to carry their standards, bearing the image of the emperor,

into the Holy City. As soon as the sacrilege—so the Jews regarded it—was known, the people flocked in crowds to Cesarea, and besought Pilate to remove the images. After resisting their importunity five days, during which he seems to have seriously meditated the general massacre with which he threatened them, he yielded, and ordered the standards back to Cesarea. At another time he nearly drove the Jews to insurrection by suspending in his palace at Jerusalem, some gilt shields inscribed with the names of Roman gods. These were removed by the command of Tiberius himself. At the time of a riot, caused by his diverting the sacred revenue arising from the redemption of vows, to a secular purpose, he sent among the multitude many soldiers armed with concealed daggers, who killed a great number, not only of the rioters but of casual spectators. To this must be added the slaughter of the “Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.”* We infer from these facts that Pilate was of a severe, tyrannical temper; and it is by no means improbable that he had come to regard the nation with contempt for its fanaticism and hatred for its stubborn and rebellious spirit. He was too experienced a politician and soldier not to know that he was standing on a volcano which was every moment ready to burst into terrible activity. He was on his guard against the Jewish rulers, in whom the old Maccabean spirit was not quite extinct. His attitude of mind was, in general, that of resistance to all their demands. He had been compelled on some occasions to yield and temporize; but he did it with reluctance; and he never forgave them the humiliations to which he was thus subjected. It was the custom of the procurator, during the great festivals, to reside at Jerusalem, with a military force

* Luke xiii. 1.

sufficient to overawe the turbulent multitude and promptly repress any riotous or insurrectionary outbreak. He was of course present at this feast of the Passover.

The members of the Sanhedrim having passed judgment on Jesus, led Him away bound to the palace of Pilate. As the great festival had but just commenced, and as they would have contracted ceremonial defilement by entering the house of a Gentile, and thus disqualified themselves for the feast, they remained without while Pilate was notified of their coming. It is not unlikely that he was roused from his bed by their messenger; but when he was told that the Sanhedrim in a body, with the High Priest at their head, were waiting at his gate, he could not well refuse to go forth to meet them. He must, one would think, have been surprised when he saw what sort of prisoner they had brought to his tribunal. It has been made a question whether Pilate had ever heard of Jesus. That he had no personal knowledge of Him is probable, but he could hardly have been ignorant of a great popular movement like that which sprang from the teachings and miracles of our Lord,—a movement in continuous connection with the ministry of John the Baptist, and having avowed reference to the King of Israel, the long-expected Messiah. We incline to the belief that Pilate had been well informed touching the external facts in the career of Jesus, and that he had come to regard Him as a religious enthusiast and reformer who, by His novel doctrines and bold rebukes, had drawn upon Himself the wrath of the Jewish rulers. He must have known of His triumphal entry; and he had probably sent the "band" or cohort to assist in arresting Him. But he certainly was not prejudiced against Him; perhaps he had even a certain sympathy with Him, as the leader of a party opposed to the Pharisees and rulers. When, therefore, he saw Him standing at his gate, a prisoner in chains,

especially when he saw the gentleness and majesty of His person, bearing marks of the blows which He had received, He probably not only recognized Him as the far-famed Prophet of Nazareth, but decided in his own mind that He was innocent, and that He should not die.

"What accusation," said he to the Sanhedrim, "bring ye against this Man?" It must have been either Caiaphas, or Annas, who answered in behalf of the body: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him unto thee." It was a haughty answer. "It is surely sufficient that we, the Sanhedrim, have tried Him and found Him guilty of capital crimes. This ought to satisfy you of His guilt." Pilate knows his men; he penetrates their plot; his lip curls in scorn; he replies in words of terrible irony, "Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law." "Is it so indeed? Am I merely to confirm your sentence, without being allowed to decide on the merits of the case? Then finish what you have so well begun. You can dispense altogether with my authority." The leaders are suddenly checkmated, even in their first move. "It is not lawful for us," they acknowledge, not without ill-concealed rage, "it is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Compelled at last to present definite charges, they carefully conceal the charge of blasphemy on which they had convicted Him, and bring forward a totally different indictment: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." Pilate must have regarded this as a strange accusation to come from *them*. When had they before prosecuted any man for forbidding the payment of the imperial tribute, or for stirring up the nation against the Roman supremacy? Whence this sudden outburst of loyal feeling in the Jewish hierarchy towards the emperor? And as Pilate looked at Jesus, standing there silent and bound, he

probably did not regard Him as a dangerous rival to Cæsar. However, the charge was so serious that Pilate was compelled to go through the form, at least, of an investigation. He therefore retired to his judgment hall in the palace, and directed Jesus to follow him.

When they were alone, Pilate, perhaps not in an unkind but rather in a half-contemptuous tone, asked "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" The form of the question shows that Pilate had already heard more of Jesus than the Sanhedrim had just told him. They had accused Him of saying that He was Christ, *a* King. Pilate's question looks as though he had heard the particulars of the triumphal entry. Who indeed shall say but he may have witnessed that strange procession, when Jesus entered the city on an ass, and the people shouted hosanna to Him as the Son of David? If so, he had penetrated the peaceful spirit of the movement, which he could not have regarded as dangerous, though perhaps it struck him as absurd. "Art *Thou* the King of the Jews?" There was perhaps a touch of real interest in the tone of the procurator. The heart of the stern man was awed and softened by the countenance and bearing of the prisoner at his bar. He had seen much of crime and depravity, but he had never before sat in judgment on such a defendant. Jesus saw the momentary emotion of His judge, and said to him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" "Is your question prompted by your own desire to know whether I am really the King of the Jews, or do you ask it merely as a magistrate because it has been charged upon Me that I make Myself a king?" The wrath of Pilate flashes out at the suspicion that he felt a *personal* interest in the matter: "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?" Pilate's moment of grace is passed. Jesus calmly, in words of sin-

gular majesty, answers, "My kingdom is not of this world : if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews ; but now is My kingdom not from hence." This agrees with what Pilate has heard of the lowly and peaceful bearing of Jesus, but he presses the question, "Art Thou a king, then ?" Jesus replies, "Yes, as thou sayest, I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

We picture to ourselves the governor, gazing with blended wonder, awe and pity on his prisoner. He seems to whisper to himself: "Yes, it is as I thought; this Jew, so unlike any other I ever saw, is at worst but a visionary enthusiast. Like our own Stoics He believes that there is such a thing as truth; and that by the truth one may truly reign without legions or treasures. They are all alike deluded. There is no truth for man: *truth—truth—WHAT IS TRUTH?*" This last he said aloud, but "stayed not for an answer." Going forth to the gate, He said to the Jews, "I FIND IN HIM NO FAULT AT ALL." The chief priests and elders at once broke forth in a storm of accusations. Pilate, seeing that Jesus was silent, said to Him, "Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? Answerest Thou nothing?" Still Jesus was silent. Again Pilate declared to the infuriated multitude, "I FIND NO FAULT IN THIS MAN." At this second declaration of our Lord's innocence, they were more furious than ever, crying out, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place." Hearing them mention Galilee Pilate inquired whether Jesus were a Galilean, and when told that He was, determined to send Him immediately to Herod Antipas, who was then in Jerusalem attending the Passover. Between the tetrarch and himself there was some kind of quarrel; and

Pilate hoped by this act of courtesy to conciliate Herod, and at the same time to transfer to him, a Jewish prince, a responsibility which he was beginning to feel painful.

Herod, whose vain and frivolous yet cruel temper we have seen displayed in his treatment of John the Baptist, seems to have recovered, if indeed he ever lost, his gay and courtly humor since the murder of the prophet. He had long burned with curiosity to see and converse with Jesus, of whose miracles he had heard such startling reports as to awaken in his superstitious mind the thought that perhaps He was the Baptist himself, risen from the dead. When therefore Jesus was brought to him he was overjoyed. Not only was his pride flattered by such an attention from a haughty Roman official, but he hoped to prevail on Jesus to do some miracle in his presence. He had no thought of trying Him, much less of condemning Him to death; for he well knew that Jesus was guilty of no crime against civil society; he only hoped to amuse himself for a passing hour, with the signs and wonders of the Galilean miracle-worker. But he was disappointed. Though he asked many questions, Jesus answered him not a word. He knew that this perfidious, frivolous, blood-stained prince, could not be reached by the voice of truth, and as his fate was to be determined at another tribunal, He held His peace. Annoyed and wearied by His obstinate silence, Herod and his men of war derided and mocked Him for a time, and then arraying Him in a gorgeous robe, probably the white robe of victory, they sent Him back to Pilate. It is emphatically stated by Luke, that "the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together."

Pilate, then, can not shake off the responsibility. He therefore calls together the Sanhedrim and the multitude with the purpose of giving a definite judgment in the case. He seems to have determined on a compromise which he hoped would satisfy, but which in fact displeased

all parties. It was the custom with the Roman governors, derived probably from the Jews themselves, to release a prisoner at the Passover,—a custom, perhaps, originally intended to commemorate the deliverance of the nation from Egyptian bondage. Pilate proposed to take advantage of this custom to secure the release of Jesus, not doubting that *the multitude*, whom he had summoned with the priests and rulers, would select Him whom they had so recently hailed with hosannas, in preference to any other prisoner. With this view, he said to them: “Ye have brought this Man unto me as one that perverteth the people; and behold, I, having examined Him before you, HAVE FOUND NO FAULT IN THIS MAN, touching those things whereof ye accuse Him; no, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him; and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him.”

It was at this moment, probably, that the *Jerusalem mob*,—it is impossible to believe that many Galileans were present—set on by their leaders, began to clamor for the release, according to custom, of the Passover prisoner. Pilate then proposed to them two prisoners, Barabbas, who had been the ringleader in an insurrection, and was even stained with the guilt of murder; and Jesus, calling upon them to choose between them: “Whom will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ?” Having caused his judgment-seat to be set up on the pavement in front of the palace, Pilate now sat down to await the decision of the people. Meanwhile he received a startling message from his wife, whose name as preserved by tradition, was Procla or Procula: “Have thou nothing to do with that just Man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.” It is a circumstance in Pilate’s favor as a man, that he was on such terms with such a woman that she could venture to send him this message even in public.

How much would we give to know her subsequent history! Like all truly noble women of that and all other ages, she was drawn to Jesus. Did she see Him through a lattice as He stood before the palace?

The people have made their election. The priests and rulers, passing rapidly among the multitude, persuade them to call for the release of Barabbas, the revolutionist, the robber, the murderer. To the amazement and horror of Pilate, the cry suddenly breaks on his ears, "Not this Man, but Barabbas! Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Pilate condescends to expostulate: "Why, what evil hath He done?" All in vain; the cry is still, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" "What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ?" Can he believe his ears? The answer comes in yells, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" What, will nothing satisfy them but the horrible death of the cross? "I will chastise Him," says the governor, "and let Him go." Again the yell of the blood-thirsty mob, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" drowns his expostulations. He resolves to appeal to them in another way. Washing his hands before them, he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." Then broke forth the cry, which has made all the nations shudder ever since: "His blood be on us and on our children!" Pilate, hearing this, released Barabbas, and gave formal sentence that Jesus should be crucified. Perhaps, however, he still hoped to save His life. He knew the quick transition of feeling in a great multitude, and he hoped that, after a little, a better mind would prevail.

It was the custom that persons doomed to the cross should first be scourged; and the scourging was often so severe, or rather brutal, that the victims died under it. Jesus, who all this time had not uttered a word, was led away into the Pretorium to be scourged. The sounds of the scourge falling on that holy body are in our ears even now. But what is this? What is it they are put-

ting on His head? It is shaped like a crown, but as they crush it down, it tears His brows, and the blood overflows His face. And see! He is already arrayed in a scarlet robe, and a reed is forced into His right hand. They bow the knee; they cry, Hail, King of the Jews; they smite Him on the head; they spit upon Him. Now, Pilate thinks, is the time to make a last appeal in His behalf. Leading Him forth in His purple robe, with His crown of thorns and His mock scepter, Pilate says to them, "Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know THAT I FIND NO FAULT IN HIM." Pointing to Jesus, bound and gory, he exclaims, "Behold the Man!" Surely, he thinks, these cannibals will ask no more. And it is remarkable, that the multitude no longer clamor for His death, but the "chief priests and officers" cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate, in wrath, says to them, "Take ye Him and crucify Him; for I FIND NO FAULT IN HIM."

At last they disclose the real cause of their implacable hatred: "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Pilate is terrified when he learns that their demand for the death of Jesus has a religious motive. He has had experience of their invincible obstinacy in all cases which concern their religion. Leading Jesus back into the judgment-hall, he inquires, "Whence art Thou?" There is no answer. The governor exclaims, "Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?" Once more Jesus opens His lips: "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, unless it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin." Pilate is strangely impressed with the words. He again resolves to save Him. But the Jews, seeing his purpose, appeal to his fear: "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king

speakeeth against Cæsar." They give him distinctly to understand that he must either crucify Jesus or defend himself before the jealous Tiberius. Pilate is conscious that *that* will never do for him. Again he sits down in his judgment-seat, Jesus standing near him. "Behold your King!" he cries. "Away with Him, away with Him, Crucify Him, Crucify Him." Pilate, in a tone of mournful yet terrible irony, asks them, "Shall I crucify your King?" Then, preferring the gloomy, perfidious, infamous, cruel Tiberius, to the Son of David, they loudly protest, "We have no king but Cæsar." They have finally, irrevocably rejected their long-promised Messiah; and now Pilate, representing then and there the Gentile world, delivers Him up to be crucified.

A lofty mountain overhangs the fair lake of Luzerne, around which the storms almost continually howl and moan. There is a wild legend which says that this mountain, called PILATE, was the dwelling-place, during his banishment, long after our Saviour's death, of the unhappy man whose name it bears; that there he died; and that there his lost ghost vents its undying remorse in despairing shrieks and wailings. Such is the impression which his unspeakable crime has made on the mind of Christendon. Perhaps however, of all the actors in that awful tragedy, he was the least guilty.

This is a fitting place to record the miserable end of the traitor Judas. When he saw that Jesus was condemned to be crucified, he was seized with remorse and despair. Hastening to the temple, he confessed to the priests and elders his sin in betraying the innocent blood, cast down the thirty pieces of silver, and went and hanged himself. The suicide was accompanied by some horrible circumstances, which we refrain from describing.*

* Acts i 18, 19.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL.

PLACE OF OUR LORD'S CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL—PREPARATIONS—THE PROCESSION—SIMON OF CYRENE—"DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM"—JESUS CRUCIFIED—PRAYER FOR HIS ENEMIES—THE TWO MALEFACTORS—THE PENITENT ROBBER—MATER DOLOROSA—THE DARKNESS—JESUS ATHIRST—GIVES UP THE GHOST—PIERCING OF HIS SIDE—HIS BURIAL.

MATTHEW XXVII. 31-66. MARK XV. 20-47. LUKE XXIII. 26-56. JOHN XIX. 16-42.

WE do not here enter into the controversy touching the place of our Lord's crucifixion and burial. The question is undoubtedly an interesting one to scholars, but has the slightest possible bearing on the great facts of our history. It is sufficient to note that the present state of the discussion seems to promise, that the uniform tradition of the church, which locates Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre within the present city walls, will be sustained by the general suffrage of the learned. It is well nigh proved that these localities were just beyond the walls of the ancient city, and but a short distance from the temple-mount and the palace of Pilate. It is probable that the present Via Dolorosa, running westward from Moriah, is really the sorrowful way by which our Lord was led forth to be crucified. He must needs be put to death without the gates. This was required by the Roman custom as well as by Jewish law. The execution was entrusted by Pilate to a band of soldiers, commanded by a centurion. The preparations were speedily

completed. The cross, constructed of transverse beams, thus, † was soon in readiness. A white tablet with an inscription or title, in Hebrew, Greek and Latin was prepared to be borne either before the Saviour, or suspended from His neck. This title, overlooked by the Jews till it was fastened on the cross, was framed by Pilate in a spirit of scornful revenge and mockery, not towards Jesus but the nation, and especially the Sanhedrim, by whom He had been compelled to give judgment contrary to his own clear and oft-expressed convictions. The title—varied doubtless in the several languages in which it was written, ran thus:—“THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

All things being ready, the soldiers laid the cross on Jesus, already weak with scourging and fasting, and exhausted by His solitary agony in the garden. But He bowed His shoulder to the burden, and the mournful procession moved forward. A probable tradition marks the spot near the gate of the city where He sank under the load. It happened just then that a certain Simon of Cyrene, in Africa, approached the place, and he was impressed by the soldiers—their centurion, perhaps, already touched with compassion towards his prisoner—and made to bear the cross after Jesus. Simon was most blessed in this cross-bearing. He probably became a disciple from that day, and his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were well known and honored by the apostolic church. It may even be true that he was the Simeon Niger, mentioned in Acts xiii. 1, as among the leading ministers of the church in Antioch.* However this may be, he had the sole honor of bearing our Lord's cross to the place of His crucifixion.

We think of Jesus at this time as surrounded with

* See Melville's Sermon on Simon the Cyrenian.

hooting, blaspheming enemies; and doubtless His weary march to Calvary was one protracted scene of insult and outrage; but there was, notwithstanding, a great multitude, especially of women,—mostly, too, it would seem, women of Jerusalem—who bewailed and lamented Him. Jesus, forgetful of His own sufferings, and keenly alive to every demonstration of loving sympathy, turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”

Having reached an open place—probably a low, rounded eminence resembling a human skull, the soldiers offered Him a cup of sour wine mingled with bitter, stupefying drugs. In His thirst He took the cup; but having tasted it and perceiving its intoxicating properties, He rejected it. Not thus would He fortify His failing humanity against the agonies of the cross. Without delay the fearful work proceeded. The cross having been fixed in the earth, the soldiers stripped Jesus of His garments, and raising Him up to the cross, bound His arms and His feet to the wood. Then followed the crowning horror, the driving of the long, sharp nails through those hands which had only been employed to bless mankind, and through those feet which had trod the earth only on ministries of mercy. No shriek of pain escapes His lips; but as the nails go crashing through bones and flesh, nerves and tendons, He prays, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The deed is done; the Son of God, the Lord of glory, Immanuel, is crucified.

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Two notorious thieves, or rather robbers, are crucified at the same time, one on His right hand and the other on His left. We conjecture that they had been connected with Barabbas in his insurrection, and that Pilate ordered them to the cross to spite the Jews. His wrathful mood was clearly disclosed in the superscription which was now fastened over the head of Jesus. Up to this moment, probably it had not been noticed by the Jews; but when they read it they ran into the city to inform the chief priests, who perhaps went forth to verify the report. Full of indignation, they hastened to Pilate, and requested him to change the title so that it should read, "He said I am the King of the Jews." Pilate, with true Roman haughtiness, replied, "What I have written, I have written." He had deliberately put a terrible meaning into the superscription: "THUS ENDS JEWISH NATIONALITY." There was a deep prophecy in the words, which he did not understand. Meanwhile, the soldiers divided among themselves the garments of Jesus, disposing of His seamless coat, or inner garment, by lot. "And they watched Him there."

Those who have courage to look may gaze on the Son of man in His mortal pain. That He should suffer in majestic patience and silence, does not surprise us; but that any in that crowd should deride His agonies strikes us as too horrible for belief. But see! His enemies pass to and fro before His face, wagging their heads, and shouting in mockery, "Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross!" This is the catch-word of the brutal mob. The priests and scribes—for they too are there—are more refined and ingenious in their taunts: "He saved others; Himself He can not save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend from the cross, that we may see and believe."

The soldiers catch the feeling of the mob, and run to offer Him vinegar, saying,—half in derision of the Jews themselves,—“If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself.”

More horrible still: the two malefactors who were crucified with Him, also reviled Him. This seems to us, at first thought, strange and monstrous,—almost incredible. A moment's reflection, however, will convince us that it was in keeping with human nature. These men were robbers. It is a reasonable conjecture that they belonged to the class which afterwards became very numerous, called zealots, who committed the most aggravated crimes under the color of patriotism and religion. They were not often brought to justice; for they were popular rather than otherwise with the Jewish people; and they found it easy, in most cases, to bribe the Roman officials, by sharing with them the spoils of helpless travelers and defenceless villages. When they were seized and thrown into prison, they probably did not apprehend any very severe punishment, still less the dreadful death of the cross. When Barabbas was released they must have regarded it as a pledge of their own speedy liberation. What, then, must have been their despair and fury, when they were suddenly dragged forth to be crucified with Jesus the Nazarene, as if they had belonged to *His* party! But for Him, they think, they would have escaped. And it is probable that Pilate would not have ordered their crucifixion, had he not been enraged by his humiliating failure to save the life of Jesus. Under these circumstances, it was but natural that these miserable men, terrified and distracted, should have turned with fury upon Jesus Himself, as the cause of the torments which they suffered. They were not, however, both equally hardened. Both indeed, at first, “*reviled*” Him; but only one of them “*railed on Him*,” or, as it is

in the Greek, "*blasphemed Him.*"* We infer from this, that after the taunts which they had both cast in His teeth, one of them became silent, while the other grew more outrageous and malignant. The latter, not taught and softened by suffering, but infuriated and hardened, railed on with growing bitterness and hate; but the former, touched by the majestic patience and forgiving love of Jesus, and awed by the near approach of death, soon began to manifest a wonderful but by no means incredible change of feeling. The blasphemies of his fellow in crime and punishment, at length, strike him as shocking, unjust and cruel. Looking over the multitude, surging and foaming like an angry sea round the cross, dashing the foul, hellish spray of their reproaches and mockeries over the meek and silent Sufferer at his side, the now broken-hearted robber glances at his former companion, saying, "Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?† And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss."

He speaks like one who had known something of Jesus before. He had probably mingled freely with the people, and it is not unlikely that he had heard many reports of our Lord's teachings and miracles; nay, it is possible that he had himself seen Him, and knew well that He called Himself and was called by His disciples, the Christ, the Son of the living God. At this moment, all that he had ever known of Jesus is brought to his remembrance; and His godlike patience and meekness convince him that He is indeed the Divine King of Israel. He asserts His sinlessness, and confesses his own exceeding guilt, nay,

* Compare Mark xv. 32 and Luke xxiii. 39.

† Trench has hit the exact sense of this passage: "Studies in the Gospels," page 291.

more ; he turns his eyes to Jesus, and prays, “ Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom ! ” “ I believe, O Thou meek Nazarene, though Thou art rejected, insulted, tortured by Jew and Gentile, that Thou art the Christ of God, and that Thou wilt hereafter reign in glory. In the day of Thy certain triumph, wilt Thou, O Lord, remember the poor, guilty, dying robber ? ” Jesus, who had not spoken a word in answer to the taunts of His enemies, now opens His ever gracious lips : “ Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise. ” “ Remember thee, poor penitent ? Yes ; thy sins are already pardoned ; and ere yonder sun shall set, thou shalt be with Me, far from this scene of suffering, among patriarchs and prophets, saints and martyrs, in their place of serene and holy repose. ” The agonies of the cross are no longer unendurable ; he is assured of rest *so soon* ! The brutality of Pilate is a precious boon to the dying malefactor ; he has lost his life—and found it.

Some of the disciples who had stood afar off, had by this time gathered close to the cross. Among them were the Marys, John the beloved, and the mother of the Lord. Yes, she also, her soul at length transfixed with the sword, the blessed Mary, is standing near the cross. She can not wipe the blood and sweat from His pale face ; she can not even embrace His nailed feet. She can but gaze on her dying Son in speechless sorrow. His eyes are upon her ; He glances from her to John, saying, “ Woman, behold thy Son ! ” With unutterable meaning in His eyes, He says to the disciple who a few hours ago lay in His bosom, “ Behold thy mother ! ” It was scarcely necessary for John to tell us, that from that hour he took her unto his own home.

Jesus is now silent. His enemies seem to have grown weary, and their fiendish yells no longer rend the air. A silent, infinite dread is falling on the multitude. Though

it is about noon, a strange darkness, every moment growing deeper and thicker, is creeping through the sky and enshrouding the earth. It is not like night; it is not a total eclipse of the sun; it is a preternatural gloom,—a black, ghastly shadow, whence no man knows, overspreading the land. During three long hours, the darkness veils from human gaze the mortal agonies of the Lamb of God.

But He is suspended there to suffer that awful thing, so foreign to His nature, so loathsome, so terrible till He, by suffering, abolished it,—DEATH. It was a battle, not so much with the physical pain of dying, as with him that had the power of death; that is, the devil. The powers of darkness were let loose upon His soul. As His life ebbed away, as the deadly pain and weakness crept nearer the seat of vitality, as His human consciousness began to be clouded and shaken, especially, as His infinite sympathy with mankind embraced and appropriated their whole guilt and condemnation, we may reverently suggest that Satan attempted to inject a doubt of His Divine Sonship, of His Father's love. At the shock of this great temptation in the moment when the unutterable pang of dissolution came upon Him, He roused Himself to assert with transcendent energy, that even in dying His relations with the Father continued unchanged. He cried with a loud voice: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!"—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!"—Forsaken He was; that is, given over to the suffering of death; but He knew that God was *His God*, and could never *absolutely* forsake Him. Some of the by-standers, not understanding the dialect in which He spoke, thought He called for Elijah, whose coming was vaguely expected at that time; and they seem to have really thought it possible that the translated prophet might appear then and there. Again Jesus cried, "I thirst!" One filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and held it to His lips, saying: "Let

alone ; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down." It was probably about this time that the darkness broke away. Jesus cried again with a loud voice, "It is finished ; Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit !" Then, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost.

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At the moment of our Lord's death, there was a great earthquake. The rocks were rent. The veil of the most holy place was rent from the top to the bottom. So grand and fearful were the phenomena which accompanied the death of Jesus, that the centurion who had superintended the crucifixion, exclaimed : "Certainly this was a righteous man ! This was truly the Son of God." There was terror, lamentation and wailing among the multitude. Smiting upon their breasts, they hastened to their own homes. His Galilean followers and friends, however, including the noble women who had ministered to Him, stood, as if chained to the place, not near the cross, but where they could plainly see all that transpired. They had not been able to minister to Him in the mortal agony ; and now they longed in vain to wash, anoint and enshroud the holy body, hanging lifeless on the cross. They could not even approach and kiss the cold feet nailed to the cruel wood, for the grim Roman soldiers kept guard around it.

The disciple whom Jesus loved, having probably taken the sorrowing mother to his own lodgings in the city, was there standing nearer the cross. He had gazed on his adored Master till the bosom on which he had so often leaned ceased to heave, till the eyes that had so often beamed love and peace upon him became fixed and rayless. And still he kept sad vigil on Golgotha, as hour after hour wore away ; and he doubtless longed to take down the blessed corpse for sepulture ; but he had no order from the governor, and no influence to obtain one ;

so he could only watch to see where they would lay Him. As the evening draws near he sees a company of soldiers approach the place; and he knows by their clubs that they have come to extinguish any faint remains of life in the three crucified men, by breaking their legs. They do break the legs of the two malefactors; but when they come to the body of Jesus they find Him already quite dead; still, to make sure, and that we might believe, one of them pierces His side with a spear, and forthwith there gushes forth a stream of blood and water. He is indeed DEAD. Be comforted, ye mourners! The cruel clubs shall not break a bone of that sacred body: no further insult or harm shall come to it, henceforth, forever. It is the temple of God, and shall speedily be raised in glory. Meanwhile, it shall tenderly be taken down from the cross; it shall have a precious burial.

Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man and a counselor, had long been a disciple of Jesus, though secretly, for fear of the Jews. During the last few hours, however, his timidity had all disappeared. As a member of the Sanhedrim, he had not consented to the sentence of his colleagues; and now that the holy Sufferer was dead he was not ashamed to testify his faith and love. He went boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Having ascertained that Jesus was already dead, Pilate gave the desired order. The Jews would gladly have seen Him buried with the malefactors in some obscure and accursed cemetery; but their malice was thwarted; "He shall make His grave with the rich in His death." Behold Joseph, hastening to Golgotha. Reverently, mournfully, the nails are drawn, and the body is taken down from the cross. As they are preparing it for burial they are joined by Nicodemus, bringing a hundred pounds of precious spices, to cover the holy corpse. They wrap it in linen clean and white, and then bear it to Joseph's garden

which is just at hand. There he had hewn for himself a stately tomb out of the living rock. In that tomb, the body of the Lord is carefully laid. They roll a great stone to the door of the sepulchre; and the burial is ended. The women of Galilee, including Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, have followed that they may see where their Master is buried. Weeping there awhile, they are admonished by the setting sun that the Sabbath is commencing, and they depart to their lodgings.

Let us draw near to this silent, deserted sepulchre. What a sleeper lies within! Thank God, He sleeps now, full of rest. After the toils, humiliations, and sufferings of thirty-three years—after the cup of death in Gethsemane—after the false trial, the jeers, the buffets, the unutterable insults of the council-chamber—after the mock coronation, the gorgeous robe, the scourging, the cross-bearing, the sharp and unknown agonies of crucifixion, after the great pang of dying—all that was mortal of Jesus SLEEPS IN HOLY PEACE. The baptism of blood is accomplished. The sacrifice is finished. The ransom is paid. The sin of the world is taken away. Hence, all ye profane and unbelieving! This is no place for cavilers, or even doubters; but draw near, all ye whose hearts are burdened with guilt, and wrung with penitence: assure yourselves here of a finished atonement.

All is finished! His mangled body, lying here embalmed in spices, is secure against corruption. His soul is in hades, doing for His church, perhaps, some mighty and glorious work—what, it belongs to the theologian rather than to this history to set forth.*

* See Acts ii. 26–28. I. Peter iii. 18, 19.

PART X.

Our Risen Lord.

CHAPTER I.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S DEATH—JESUS IN THE SEPULCHRE—IN HADES—
THE RESURRECTION—THE WOMEN AT THE SEPULCHRE—MARY MAG-
DALENE—THE WALK TO EMMAUS—JESUS APPEARS AND VANISHES—
APPEARS TO PETER—TO THE ELEVEN.

MATTHEW XXVII. 62-66; XXVIII. 1-15 MARK XVI. 1-18. LUKE XXIV. 1-49. JOHN XX. 1-25.
I. CORINTHIANS XV. 5.

THE JEWS had somehow come to the knowledge of our Lord's promise, that He would rise from the dead the third day; and they seem to have had a glimmering perception of the meaning of His words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Knowing that if the body were missing the belief would prevail that Jesus was really risen, they felt the importance of keeping watch over the sepulchre till the expiration of the third day. They therefore applied to Pilate for a watch, and he readily but rather contemptuously granted their request. Having placed the sentinels at the door of the sepulchre, they carefully sealed the stone. All this was done by these men who had persecuted Jesus for Sabbath-breaking, on the great Passover Sabbath.

The day,—saddest since time began,—drags wearily on. The soldiers watch around the sepulchre, but there is neither voice nor sound from within. The holy body sleeps in silence and darkness. It is still the temple of the Holy Ghost. The forces of corruption have no power

over it. If any change is going on, it is a supernatural one to prepare it for the new life which it is about to receive. Such a change probably commenced at the moment of death; for the gushing forth of blood and water from His pierced side was a proof, not only that He was really dead, but that His dead body was miraculously preserved from the beginnings of corruption. There was no decomposition even of the fluids which had belonged to His living organism. We can not doubt that the miraculous energy which prevented decomposition wrought a secret alteration in the corporeal frame which fitted it for the higher life of the resurrection.*

We must observe in passing, that the stream of blood and water was doubtless symbolical also. In the pouring forth of His precious blood was signified the utter oblation of the former natural life; "for the life is in the blood,"† and the effusion of water signified the purifying efficacy of that oblation. The water and the blood still testify

* The interesting and important questions connected with the stream of blood and water which followed the spear-thrust, are foreign to the design of this book. The view suggested in the text is eclectic, combining the opinion of those who hold that the spear penetrated the pericardium, if not the heart itself, and that of others who, asserting that blood will not flow from a body that is really dead, regard the phenomenon as wholly miraculous. It has not, to my knowledge, been suggested as possible that all the fluids of the Lord's body were poured out through the wound in His side. *Blood* did not enter into the constitution of the resurrection body. The old *life*—which was in the blood—was wholly offered up on the cross. I assert nothing; but suggest the question as legitimate and important.

When I say that the Lord's body was miraculously preserved from corruption, I would be understood to protest, most solemnly against the docetic notion, recently revived, that His body was, in its own nature immortal, and that His death resulted from a supernatural energy of volition. This undermines the whole doctrine of the Incarnation. If Jesus did not take a mortal and corruptible body, He did not truly assume our nature, and had no fraternal sympathy with us. Has the age of gnosticism returned?

† Leviticus xvii. 11.

on earth, in the blessed sacraments, to the reality of our Lord's incarnation, and the redeeming might of His reconciliation-death.*

Thus, then, the body of Jesus reposes in the sepulchre. Meanwhile His spirit in hades is quickened with the new, imperishable life, which, on its return, is to animate, transform and glorify the material frame.†

The disciples are weeping; the women are preparing precious ointment and spices for the more solemn anointing of the blessed body; the Sabbath sun goes down; the sentinels, hour after hour, still pace slowly round the sepulchre. Midnight comes and goes; the great city is asleep. Under the solemn, vaulted firmament the whole earth seems one still and holy sepulchre for the Lord of glory. Suddenly the earth heaves and rocks; swift as a shooting star a glorious angelic form descends from heaven, rolls away the stone and sits upon it. "His countenance is like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." The sentinels quake with terror, and fall to the earth as dead men.

God's mightiest works are wrought in secret. The resurrection of the Lord was not witnessed by mortal eyes. Had the story been a cunningly devised fable, all the details of the pretended miracle would have been recorded. But this was an event which the most advanced and enlightened disciples could not have witnessed, without danger to their reason, perhaps to life itself. For the resurrection of Jesus was not like that of Lazarus, a return to the natural, earthly life; but a change from mortal to immortality. While our Lord's body was really raised from the tomb, it is evident that its constitution was mysteriously changed. It became spiritual, life-full, incorruptible, glorious, heavenly. He

* I. John v. 6, 8

† I. Peter iii. 18.

entered on a new mode of existence, above the conditions of earthly life. Henceforth, He appears and disappears at will, and goes from place to place by some mode of locomotion unknown to us. It is even doubtful whether the term locomotion is applicable to His acts and appearances in the resurrection-state. If, in the progress of science, the relations of spirit to matter, and the ultimate nature or essence of both should be ascertained, much of the mystery which now envelops the subject will be dispelled. Meanwhile it is matter of simple faith that our Lord, in rising from the dead, was glorified by the transforming—perhaps I should say *transmuting*—energy of the new life which had taken possession of His humanity. Henceforth, He is the RISEN MAN, the LIVING ONE, the CONQUERER OF DEATH AND HADES, the IMMORTAL AND LIFE-GIVING SECOND ADAM, THE LORD FROM HEAVEN.

The incidents which took place on this memorable day, may be gathered up from the four evangelists and woven into a consistent narrative, as follows:—In the early morning of the first day of the week, while it was yet dark, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and other women, went to the sepulchre with the spices which they had prepared. On their way it occurred to them that there was none to roll away the great stone from the door of the sepulchre; but, impelled by love and sorrow, they hastened onward. When they reached the place the east was all aglow with “the awful rose of dawn;” but they had no eyes for the auroral splendor. Their hearts were in the sepulchre of the Lord, and thither they turned their gaze. What was their consternation to find the stone rolled away! There was *one* in that company who loved much, for she had been forgiven much. This was Mary Magdalene, who, if she was not that “woman of the city” who washed the feet of Jesus

with her tears and wiped them with her hair, had been rescued by Him from a fearful bondage to the powers of darkness; for out of her He had cast seven demons. When she saw that the stone was rolled away, her heart sank within her; she felt that the beloved body was gone—stolen, she feared, by the enemies of her Lord. Not pausing to examine the sepulchre, she ran to Peter and John in the city, who seem to have occupied the same lodgings, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.” The apostles, thunder-struck, at once ran towards the sepulchre.

Meanwhile the other women entered the sepulchre, where they saw two angels in human form, clad in white and glistening garments. Amazed and terrified, they bowed themselves to the earth; but they were reassured by the words, “Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” Instantly leaving the sepulchre, agitated with fear rather than with hope, they hastened with their message to the disciples. While they were on their way, Jesus Himself met them, saying, “ALL HAIL!” These were His first words after His resurrection—words of love and victorious joy. They reverently approached Him; they held Him by the feet; they worshiped Him. “Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go tell My brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.” The message was faithfully communicated to the disciples; but they had not faith to act upon it. The words of the women seemed to them like idle tales.

Scarcely had the women departed from the sepulchre,

when John, breathless and wondering, reached the spot. He has a secret hope which he hardly acknowledges to himself. Withheld by reverence, he does not at once enter the sepulchre; but stooping down and looking in, sees the linen grave-clothes lying, but that is all. At this moment Peter arrives, and without hesitation goes into the sepulchre, and John follows him. The sepulchre is indeed empty. The linen clothes are lying in one place, and the napkin which was about His head, *carefully folded*, is lying in another. John sees in this a proof that the body had not been hastily removed, but that *Jesus Himself* had deliberately, in a manner *characteristic*, disrobed Himself of the grave-clothes, folded them up and laid them aside. The two apostles, after a moment's stay, afraid, perhaps, that the Jews would find them there, and accuse them of stealing the body, return to the city, filled with unutterable emotions.

Mary Magdalene, who has again reached the place, can not so readily tear herself away. She "stood without, at the sepulchre, weeping." Love is very bold. Stooping down and looking into the sepulchre, she is scarcely surprised, much less terrified, at sight of the two angelic forms, sitting the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. "Woman," they say, "why weepest thou?" "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." While thus gazing into the sepulchre, she is conscious that some person is standing near; she turns herself; she sees a STRANGER; but she can not through the veil of her tears, discern in that stranger her adored Lord; and besides, her passionate seeking for the dead prevents her recognizing the Living. "Woman," says Jesus, "why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" She does not even know the voice; but hastily inferring that He is the gardener, and catching eagerly at every shadow

of hope, she replies, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." *She* will take Him away. Such is the conscious might of her love. "MARY!" says a voice, familiar as it is dear,—a voice which once penetrated the depths of her disordered consciousness, and has often since summoned her to receive instruction and comfort,—a voice which now thrills her soul with the assurance of His resurrection and personal presence. Turning herself quickly, she pours forth her love, her faith, her joy, in a single rapturous exclamation: "RABBOXI!" She struggles to embrace His feet; she would renew the former intercourse; she clings to the humanity of His humiliation; she forgets, for the moment, that He is risen, or believes that He has returned, like Lazarus, to His natural life; but she must learn that He is no longer mortal; that He has entered on a higher mode of existence; that her communion with Him must henceforth be of a different nature. Therefore He shrinks away from contact with her, saying, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God." This implies that *after His ascension*, His people should enjoy some sort of contact with Him; that He would be present with them more really and in a higher sense than during the period of His humiliation. Blessed are those who have learned what this meaneth!

Happy Mary, hasten with thy tidings to the disciples! What if they believe not? Not many hours shall elapse ere their unbelief, rooted after all in love that longs to believe, shall be changed to full assurance.

It was probably about this time that the enemies of our Lord received the first intimations of His resurrection, from the soldiers who had guarded the sepulchre. The

large bribe by which they suborned them to declare that the disciples stole the body while they were sleeping at their post, was in keeping with their whole course of procedure from the time they bargained with Judas to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver.

The interview between the Lord and two other disciples, briefly alluded to by Mark, is circumstantially and most touchingly narrated by Luke. One of these disciples is nameless,* but the other was Cleopas, or Cleopatros, who must not be confounded with the Clopas, or Alpheus, mentioned in John xix. 25. The names are quite different, the former being Greek, the latter Aramean. It is assumed by Lange that these disciples were of Gentile extraction.† Early in the afternoon they left Jerusalem for Emmaus, a village the site of which can not now be identified, some eight miles west or north-west from the city. The motive of this journey is not apparent. They had already heard the report of the women that the Lord was risen, and it seems unaccountable, notwithstanding their incredulity, that they did not remain to verify that report. We cannot but conjecture that, overwhelmed as they were with perplexity and sorrow, they withdrew from the crowded city, throbbing with excitement, to the stillness and seclusion of the country, for the purpose of calm deliberation touching their future course of action. It is evident that they regarded the career of Jesus as ended. They believed that He was *dead*; and their hopes touching the speedy manifestation of the kingdom of God were buried in His sepulchre. Perhaps in their despondency they even meditated detaching themselves from the disciples, and returning to their own homes. If so, the Good Shepherd, whose eyes were upon them though they saw

* Early tradition fixed on Luke himself as the one intended. I wish there were evidence of the fact.

† Life of Christ, pp. 70, 71.

Him not, overtook them soon after their departure from the fold.

For as they communed together by the way, and *reasoned*, not it seems entirely agreed in their views, a TRAVELER whom they knew not, quite naturally joined them and walked in their company. Notwithstanding His altered form they would have recognized Him as the crucified One, had not their eyes been "holden." Perhaps they were not well pleased at this interruption of their confidential conference; but the Stranger addressed them in a kind and sympathizing tone, and they could not find it in their hearts to repel Him: "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" The words indicate, more clearly in the Greek than in the English, the dreary dejection expressed in their downcast faces.* Their reply intimates the slightest possible irritation as well as surprise: "Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass here in these days?" "What things?" asks the unknown Traveler. Their reserve melts away; they answer frankly enough: "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet, mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre. And when they found not His body, they came, saying that they had seen a vision of angels which said that He was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the

* See Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, page 315, note.

women had said; but Him they saw not." These words laid open their inmost hearts. Their ignorance of Christ as the God-man, their faith in Him as a mighty Prophet, their hope that He would prove to be the Messiah, their bitter disappointment when He was crucified, their love, stronger than death, yearning for some sufficient proof of His resurrection—all was artlessly disclosed. And this was what the Lord had sought to draw forth by His question. Strange that they did not begin to surmise who He was when He reproved them for their stolid unbelief: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" It was the sufferings of Christ that had staggered their faith. It was necessary for them to understand that those sufferings entered into the divine scheme of redemption from the beginning. Therefore He explained to them the prophecies touching Himself, from Moses down. Surely, if Luke had heard that wondrous discourse of the risen Lord, he would have preserved some record of it. It is impossible to doubt that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was the central prophecy among those which Jesus expounded. Ere they reached Emmaus, the two disciples had been thoroughly instructed in respect to the necessity of Christ's atoning death as prerequisite to the glory that followed; they felt themselves marvellously warmed and enlightened by the words of the wonderful Stranger; and they were unwilling to part company with Him. So when they reached the village, they said: "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." To test their faith and love, "He made as though He would have gone further," which He certainly would have done, had they not stood the test. When they sat down to meat, they gave Him the place of honor; and it was, therefore, His office to bless and break the bread. Something pe-

culiar and characteristic in His action,—and possibly the scars in His hands,—revealed Him to their now opened eyes. But at the moment of the revelation, He vanished out of their sight. They now wondered that they had not recognized Him before: for they “said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” They have now no further business at Emmaus. No longer dejected and doubting, they traversed, as with winged feet, the eight miles between them and Jerusalem. They found the apostles gathered together, and they were greeted with the joyful tidings, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” Then they told their own wondrous story, about the things that were done in the way, and how He was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

It is remarkable that while the apostles believed Peter, they refused to credit the two disciples. How shall this be explained? Probably He appeared to Peter almost immediately after He vanished from the view of the two at Emmaus. That He thus passed from place to place at will, after His resurrection, is certain; but the apostles had not yet learned that He was liberated from the conditions of His former life in the flesh. Hence they regarded the story of the two disciples as opposed to the testimony of Peter. While they were thus, in a thoroughly rationalistic spirit, discussing this conflict of testimony, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them. No door had opened; no sound had been heard; no one had seen His coming. They were struck with superstitious dread. This mysterious appearance, combined with what they had just heard from Peter and the two disciples, seemed to them a certain proof that He was not a risen man, but a disembodied spirit. They had no conception of a resurrection which was not like that of Lazarus, (who

perhaps was among them at that moment,) in his natural body. While, therefore, they recognized the form before them as that of Jesus, they hastily though quite naturally thought it was a spectre. Their terror was not dispelled when He said, "Peace be unto you!" and it probably reached its height when He began to "upbraid them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them who had seen Him after He was risen." It was necessary that their fear—a kind of fear always deadly to true faith—should be removed. He therefore proceeded to convince them that He was truly the crucified One risen from the dead, and not a ghost from hades: "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Then He showed them His hands, His feet, and His *side*. (John xx. 20.) The disciples were glad when they thus saw the Lord; but they scarcely believed for joy. That all doubt might be extinguished, He called for food and ate in their presence a piece of a broiled fish and of a honey-comb. Thus He demonstrated to them, that whatever mysterious change had passed upon Him, He was still in connection with the natural world, and held full mastery over its elements. He did not intend to teach them that His life would continue to be sustained by natural food, but rather to prove to their senses the reality of His resurrection.

Having thus calmed their agitation, He reminded them that all which had perplexed them was in fulfillment of His own words while He was yet with them, as well as of the more ancient prophecies. "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance, and remission of sins should be

preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." The evangelists have recorded this commission with variations, resulting in part from the peculiar genius and design of each; but it is evident that many things were said by the Lord which are not recorded. John was impelled to select the more spiritual sayings. "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." The breathing was a symbol and a pledge that FROM HIM the Holy Ghost should come upon them all; and that when thus endued with His spirit, they should have power to convey to the hearts and consciences of penitent sinners, that forgiveness which He had so dearly purchased for them. The church should be the channel through which "remission of sins," as Luke has it, should be authoritatively and effectually declared to the broken-hearted and believing. There were sins, however, those unto death, which the church should not be able to remit. It does not appear that our Lord has in these words empowered His church to remit the *punishment* of sin, either in this world, or in the world to come.

The evangelist Mark has given still another phase of this commission:—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if

they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Thus the Spirit of the risen Lord is to work through the church, doing those works of grace and power, through His people, which He once wrought through His natural body. Has the church utterly ceased to fulfill its functions as the Body of Christ ?

At this meeting, Thomas surnamed the Twin was not present. The cause of his absence is not intimated ; but we conjecture that he was just then in no mood to associate with his fellow-disciples. He was evidently of a melancholy, despondent temper ; and the fearful scenes of Passion Week had probably plunged him into the deepest mental distress. He was brave, loving, and constant, but lacking in hope and *faith*. Indeed, He is well called the skeptical apostle. When the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord," he replied, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Have we, then, a Hume, or a Renan among the apostles ? Though ten of his colleagues testified that they had seen their Master alive, he would not believe. He would not be convinced by any evidence short of sensation : nay, he would not receive the testimony of a single sense ; he must not only see but handle ; he must put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side. There is something wonderfully *modern* in this. A Voltaire, or a Strauss, could not have demanded more overpowering evidence. Even previous to the death of Christ, the tendency of Thomas to call in question everything spiritual and mysterious had been clearly disclosed. When Jesus said that He was going to His Father, and by a way which they all knew, Thomas broke in with an objection : "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know

the way?" That is, we do not *see* heaven, or the God of heaven; how then can we know the way to heaven and to God? He required some sense-perception of the spiritual world, some Jacob's ladder, though not in a dream, which would show him the end of his journey at the time he set out. He was no credulous enthusiast, no dreaming mystic, no hunter after marvels, but one who would be called in our generation a man of solid sense, resolutely rejecting everything strange and novel, and standing on the firm granite of experience. Hence, when he heard the news of the Lord's resurrection, he suspended his judgment, and refused to believe till he saw with his own eyes, and handled the Word of Life with his own hands. It is probable that, but for the unbelief and despondency of Thomas, the disciples would have at once set out for Galilee, as their Lord had commanded them; but He would not lose one whom the Father had given Him, and they, therefore, doubtless in accordance with an intimation from Him, remained in Jerusalem another week.

On the evening of the next Lord's Day, the disciples are again assembled in their usual place. The doors are shut. They doubtless, at this meeting, expect His appearing; nor are they disappointed. Suddenly, Jesus is seen standing in the midst of the little assembly. He salutes them as before, saying, "Peace be unto you!" We imagine that, from the first, His eyes were fixed in pitying love on Thomas! "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing." What a moment for Thomas! Will he accept the challenge? Will he critically examine the scars of his Lord, whom he loves, after all, with all the strength and fervor of a great heroic soul! He responds to the challenge in words of adoration: "My Lord, and My God!" Those who regard this as an exclamation of idle wonder, or at

best, of sudden joy, are incapable of entering into the deeper facts of our Lord's history. No; Thomas meant what he said. From that moment his faith in his Divine Lord never wavered. Yet even Thomas would have been more blessed had he believed without seeing. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." His lack of confidence in the testimony of his fellow-disciples was unreasonable; in some degree it was criminal; at any rate, it robbed him of the peace and joy with which the resurrection of the Lord would otherwise have filled his soul.

The church to-day testifies that she saw the Lord after His resurrection and heard His voice; nay, that she sees Him still, especially in the breaking of bread, and that He is with her always, her Lord and her God. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!

CHAPTER II.

THE RISEN SAVIOUR IN GALILEE.

JESUS SHOWS HIMSELF TO SEVEN DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS—
HE APPEARS TO MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED ON A MOUNTAIN IN
GALILEE.

JOHN XXI. 1-24. MATTHEW XXVIII. 16-20. I. CORINTHIANS XV. 6.

THERE were no more toilsome journeys for the Lord over the dusty plains and parched hills of Palestine. He last met the disciples in Jerusalem: they will next see Him in Galilee; but He does not now, as formerly, walk with them through the vale of Sychar, and down the precipitous hills which mirror themselves in the blue waters of Gennesaret. Yet He will come to them on the shore of that fair lake, though not from Jerusalem, not by any earthly pathway.

Jesus had commanded the disciples to go into Galilee; and had doubtless appointed the time and the place of their convocation. It seems quite certain that all the pronounced disciples in Judea, Perea, and Galilee were summoned to the assembly; and many, as we shall see, obeyed the summons. The time was favorable for their making the journey without attracting special notice, for many caravans of pilgrims were now returning from the Passover to their distant homes. The apostles were once more in their old homes, and among familiar scenes. Peter was apparently with his family at Capernaum, and several of the apostles were with him. These were Na-

thanael Bartholomew, Thomas Didymus, the two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples who are nameless. Peter, impatient of idleness, and not averse to his former occupation, longing perhaps to be afloat once more on the fair Galilean lake, suddenly declared his purpose to improve what seemed a favorable night for fishing. His friends at once expressed their wish to join him. So they launched forth, probably in Peter's own boat. But the time was less propitious than they thought, for during the whole night they caught nothing. We can not help thinking, however, that they had sweet communion with one another, as they let down and drew up their empty nets.

In the morning twilight One stood on the shore whom they knew not, and called to them, as if desiring to buy of them, "Children, have ye any meat?" The mode of address, being in the usual style of the country, caused them no surprise, and they simply answered, No. When He told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, thinking perhaps that He had observed some indications in the agitated water of what fishermen call a *shoal* in that direction, they at once obeyed, and the net enclosed so many fish that they were unable to draw it up. John, reminded of the former miraculous draught, and glancing with his quick, penetrating eye at Him who stood on the shore, said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Peter, with a less fine and delicate perception, but with more decision and promptitude than the beloved disciple, instantly girt his outer garment around him, plunged into the sea, and swam ashore, a distance of a hundred yards. The other six disciples slowly drag the net to land, and unable even then to forego their usual habit of counting, found that they had taken one hundred and fifty-three fish of extraordinary size. They were the more inclined to count them, because they regarded the draught as miraculous.

They were doubtless surprised when they saw a fire of coals, with fish broiling upon it, and a supply of bread for the morning meal. Having added some of the fish which they had just taken, "Jesus said unto them, Come and dine." There was evidently something peculiar and unearthly in the appearance of the Lord, such as to suggest though not to confirm the slightest shade or beginning of doubt touching His identity. "None of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord."

Having thus given proof of His sympathy with those wants and weaknesses of their mortal nature to which He was no longer subject, Jesus addressed Himself to Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" He no longer calls him the MAN OF ROCK; he is no longer *Peter* since his three-fold denial of his Lord; and though he has been forgiven, he is still virtually suspended from the apostolic office. To him this sudden question, whether he loved Jesus more than his fellow-disciples, is terrible. Besides, the *love* which Jesus inquires after is not that warm, personal affection with which the heart of Peter is at this moment palpitating, but if a higher, yet a calmer, more reasoning, less passionate attachment. Peter is hurt by what strikes him as the cold and cautious *form* of the question, as well as by its substance. He therefore not now comparing himself with the other disciples, replies, "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee." "*Love*—this high, calm love of moral esteem—is too cold to express what I feel; my affection towards Thee is tender and ardent, like that of a bosom friend." Jesus answered, "Feed My lambs." Prove your attachment by deeds, especially by tenderly caring for the helpless and feeble of My flock. Jesus puts the same question, in the same form, a second time; and Peter returns the same answer. Jesus in response

says, "Feed My sheep." Thus He fully restores the repentant disciple to the apostleship. And now in asking a third time, "Lovest thou Me?" He takes up Peter's word, signifying personal and passionate attachment. Peter, however, is grieved at the repetition of a question which seems to intimate a doubt of his sincere affection; so he throws himself on the Lord's omniscience, exclaiming, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Again, the command is, "Feed My sheep."

Having thus renewed Peter's apostolic commission, our Lord gives him a prophetic insight into the future: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Jesus had just seen Peter, in the full strength of manhood, gird his fisher's coat about him, and swim with muscular, outstretched arms to the shore. He tells him that he should live to old age, but then, in his weakness he would be compelled to stretch forth his hands on the cross, to which he should be bound and fastened by his enemies. He closes with the general command, which they had so often heard, "Follow Me," and begins to withdraw. Peter, understanding Him literally, and supposing, perhaps, that Jesus had something to communicate to him apart from the other disciples, follows Him. Turning about, he sees that John is also following. Not in a spirit of petulance, but of untimely curiosity, he says to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Jesus, in His former characteristic manner, replies, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." It is scarcely surprising that in John's extreme old age the affection of the disciples should have turned this saying into a positive declaration, that John

should never die, but should survive to be changed and translated at the coming of the Lord.

Where the "great congregation" of the disciples was convened is unknown. It is almost certain that at this meeting the five hundred brethren mentioned by Paul, were assembled with the eleven apostles, who alone are mentioned by Matthew. The circumstances of this appearing are not related; but it seems to have been in peculiar majesty. When the disciples saw Him, they prostrated themselves in adoration, though some—none of the apostles, surely—"doubted," not His resurrection, but the lawfulness of such adoration. He, however, accepted their worship, and "spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

CHAPTER III.

THE ASCENSION.

DURING the forty days subsequent to His resurrection, our Lord had no fixed abode on earth. He did not, as some have imagined, dwell in seclusion with His blessed mother; much less in some solitary place whence He went forth, at intervals, to show Himself to His disciples. Though His material body, far from being annihilated or given over to corruption, came forth from the tomb the same body, it was mysteriously changed and glorified. Matter, in His risen humanity, was transmuted into something rich and rare: I had almost said that it passed, by a wondrous transubstantiation, into spirit. It became a "spiritual body." Instinct with immortal life and energy, it was no longer bound by the laws of natural corporeity. Jesus no longer belonged to the natural world, though the natural world still belonged to Him, and was more than ever subject to His royal will.

The theory has been broached, and has found some distinguished advocates, that the body of the Lord was gradually glorified during the great forty days. It is a theory beset with fatal difficulties; and it derives no support from the Scriptures. While it seems to account for the delay of the ascension, it attaches to that event an importance, as compared with the resurrection, which the evangelists do not ascribe to it. Indeed, Matthew and John do not even mention the ascension, evidently because they regard it as implied in His resurrection;

while Mark and Luke make it quite subordinate. The significance of the ascension depends entirely on our Lord's mode of existence after He rose from the dead. If He was glorified in His resurrection, then the ascension becomes *the last of His appearances to His disciples*, and as such, memorable and glorious, but not a proof of any change in His humanity, or in His relations to the natural world on the one hand or to the spiritual on the other. If it be now asked, where did our Lord dwell during the great forty days, we ask in reply, where but in heaven itself—in the Father's house—the true home of His glorified humanity? From the morning of His resurrection, He was an inhabitant of the heavenly world. Except when He was with His disciples—nay, even then,—He was surrounded with celestial hosts who adored and served Him as their King and Lord. He vanished from the eyes of men into a world of ineffable light and beauty and blessedness. He was already crowned; He was already, as He told the disciples on the Galilean mountain, invested with all power in heaven and in earth; He was already sitting on the right hand of God.

The inspired history records *eleven* distinct appearances of the Lord during the forty days; but we infer from the words of Luke* that these were by no means all. It is probable that to one or more of the disciples He showed Himself almost daily. For these frequent manifestations there was urgent need. The disciples were as yet too infirm and timid to go alone. They could not even stand without His personal presence; for, though Jesus was glorified, the Holy Ghost was not yet given. They were not prepared for the Spirit-baptism; they must be taught to seek for it in earnest prayer; their hearts must be uplifted to receive it. Thus the state of the disciples

* Acts i. 3.

serves to explain not only our Lord's frequent manifestations to them after His resurrection, but also the delay of the promised effusion of the Holy Ghost.

The period of delay, however, was now drawing to a close. The disciples were again assembled at Jerusalem, not now dispirited and perplexed, but full of hope and joy. They probably expected that Christ's visible reign would commence about the time of the descent of the Holy Spirit. When, therefore, they came together,—perhaps in their usual chamber in the city,—and Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, “they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” He answered: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Having thus again repeated the substance of the great commission, He led forth the disciples up the familiar road to the summit of Mount Olivet. Having passed the crest of the mountain to the eastern slope, over against Bethany, He lifted up His hands to bless them, and in the act He ascended through the air till a cloud—probably the light-cloud of the transfiguration—received Him out of their sight. While they were gazing upward, two angels in human form, clad in white robes, stood by them, and said to them, and through them to *us*, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up in heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

In these last days, the voice of the ascended Lord is sounding full and clear in the ears of all who wake and watch: “Surely, I come quickly. Amen.”

EVEN SO, COME LORD JESUS! AMEN.

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